NINTENDO GAMECUBE • DS • GBA

NGC

ISSUE #111
OCTOBER 2005 / £3.99
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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO

FIRST REVIEW

POKEMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

■ It's the Pokémon RPG you've always wanted!

EXCLUSIVE!

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

■ Comic genius! The superhero game of the year playtested!

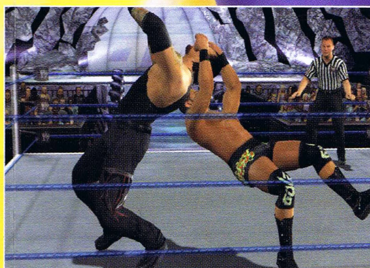
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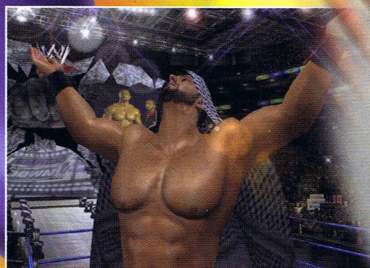
GEIST

■ Nintendo's spooky shooter reviewed!

WWE: DAY OF RECKONING 2

■ Rated! We grapple with the big boys







MARIO BASEBALL

■ Mario's big hitter reviewed

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HEY YOU PIKACHU

So you want more Pokémon, do you? Well here you go, take this: an exclusive review of *Pokémon XD* on Gamecube. It's eight pages long and begins on page 56 – Poke yourselves out. Still want more? Then skip to **NGC** Pocket News for the low-down on THREE new Pokémon DS titles. We're trying our best to collect 'em all, we really are, but Pokémon games seem to be reproducing quicker than rabbits on a photocopier. Pretty soon, there will be more of them than socks.

But that's nothing, not in an issue where plenty of other games are making waves and breaking hearts. Like *Pac 'n' Roll*, or *Geist*, a Gamecube exclusive that took longer to make than a good bottle of wine. And, indeed, *Super Mario Miracle Stadium Baseball*. Can Nintendo's magic weather this most American of sports? Well, duh – did we really have to ask?

Still, if we can't catch 'em all, we can preview 'em all, starting with *Ultimate Spider-Man* on page 18. Enjoy!

TEAM NGC

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
They weren't lying. It really is the first proper Pokémon RPG on Gamecube. Flick to page 56 now!



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Go to page 83 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands. With a free copy of *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* too.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.

NGC'S FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!





PAGE 56







PAGE 18

POKEMON XD

IT'S POKEMAZING

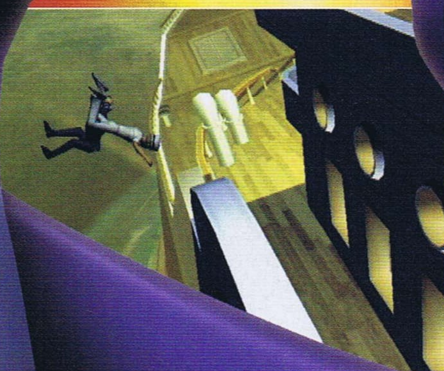
Could this be the Gamecube Pokémon game that finally manages to steal some of the GBA's thunder?

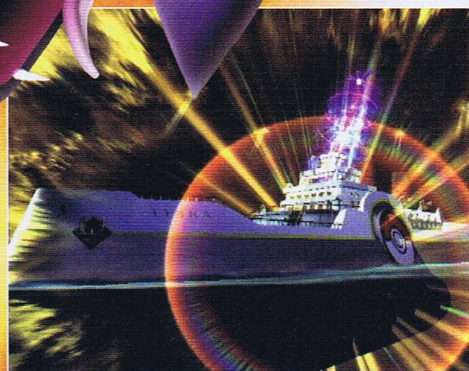
ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

A WEB OF TRUTHS

Catch this exclusive preview in a net of silk, roll it up and eat it. Then get crushed by a shoe.







POKEMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

■ LUGIA AND FRIENDS TAKE POKEMON TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL (UP)



3 PAGE 37



4 PAGE 32

RARE WARE

GOTTA COLLECT 'EM ALL

Our guide to the coveted games and hardware that are thinner on the ground than skid marks.




5 PAGE 84

TOP 20 HARDEST GAMES EVER

MISSIONS IMPOSSIBLE

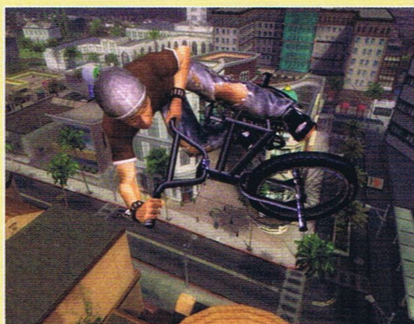
Nintendo, eh? Cute, cuddly and harmless? Wrong. Dead wrong. WRONG TO DEATH.

WHAT'S IN NGC?

Like a lonely hearts column, but with games instead of dames

PREVIEWS

It's like looking into the future…

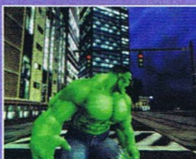


NEWS

Developments in the world of Nintendo

OTHER STUFF

Pick 'n' misc




REVIEWS

Some good games. And Geist.

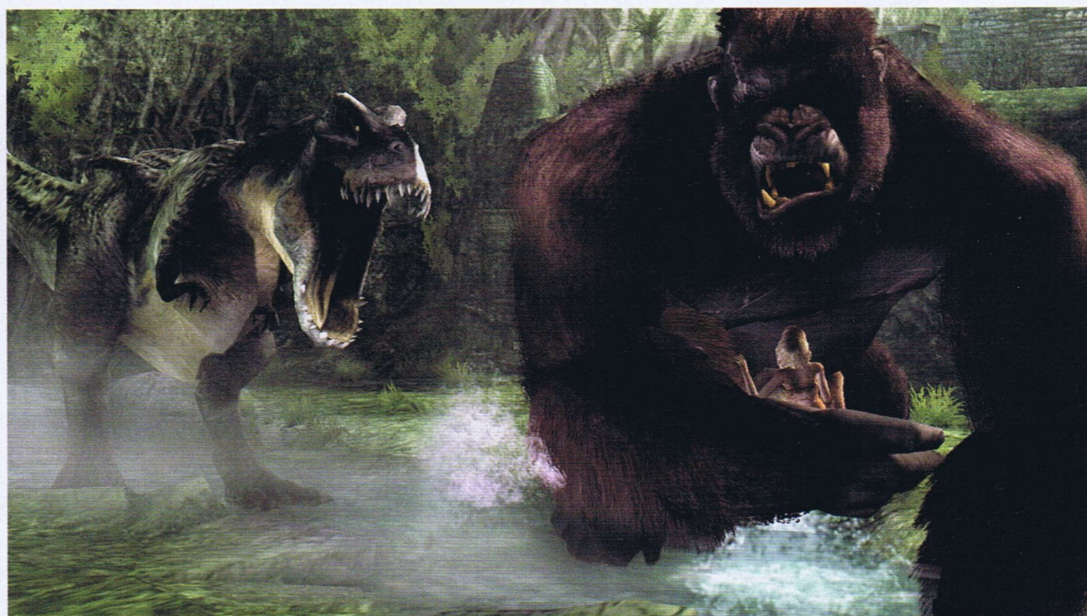




NEWSDESK

OUR PROMISE

It's the news section! Every month we delay its completion for as long as possible to ensure that everything we stuff in here is as fresh as it can possibly be. Which basically means it's usually written at 2am when we're all wired on the rancid coffee out of the office vending machine. Honestly, you don't want to know the pain we go through for you guys...



MONKEY BUSINESS

Ubisoft go ape in this cracking Christmas blockbuster...

While Ubisoft's touting of *King Kong* as the best 'movie game' ever made may be premature, it is shaping up to be a genuine contender.

Ubisoft are keen to push the fact it has Peter Jackson's stamp of approval – something that extends to the developers being allowed access to all of the assets created during the production of the film. That's art, sets, concept designs – the lot

Despite the levels we played forcing you down a predetermined path, they still feel organic and it looks amazing. There's an inherent 'jungleness' about the sections that we've played, and they've all been expertly conveyed.

The most impressive aspect though, is the richly cinematic feel. Ubisoft have shied away from many of the conventions we take for granted in games. There's no ammo meter, health gauge, or targeting reticule for that matter.

If you're running out of ammo, your character will tell you how many magazines or bullets you have left when you reload. Take damage and the screen will shake wildly, briefly disorientating you and jarring you enough so you know that you're in trouble.

Aiming with no reticule is surprisingly intuitive, too. Just keep the enemy in the centre of the screen, where you'd expect a hit to connect, and hey presto, you've hit your mark.

The purity of such an interface really works, it not only makes a difference to how you're drawn into the action, but makes those moments of tension feel even more, well, tense. There's a cleanliness to this system that we've found ourselves welcoming with open arms.

Even though the game is still a little on the unfinished side (there were a couple of glitches, like NPCs running into walls) and there are some little niggles, like the way enemies are reset after death even though your ammo isn't, it still looks like it will be a sure-fire winner when it's finally released. Until then, check out the boxout of our personal highlights...

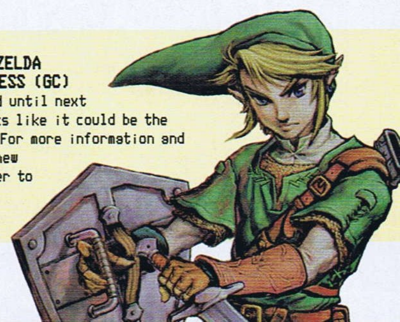


△ **King Kong himself is suitably impressive.**

HOT RELEASES



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA TWILIGHT PRINCESS (GC)
It's been delayed until next year, but it looks like it could be the best game on GC. For more information and some incredible new screens flick over to page 8 now.
Out: 2006





THE PICK OF THE BUNCH

Despite the fact that we don't know the chronological order of these sequences, here are the best bits of the demo we were shown. Pretty impressive, no?



This is the opening level of the demo, and a great showcase for the game. It's here that you witness Ann being taken by Kong after she's offered to him by the island's natives. Once she's been taken, you have to chase after her while the islanders throw flaming spears at you from the safety of their fortress.



There are a couple of scenes where you have to protect someone or something. In the scene pictured above, you have to keep a pack of velociraptors off Ann's back from the other side of a chasm. In another section you have to distract an angry T-Rex, while members of your team frantically try to open a door to safety.



We found ourselves dying a worrying amount of times on this section. Here, Carl (the guy with the camera) is snatched away by a pterodactyl-like creature and flown off to a nearby nest on top of a cliff. It's up to you to get him back by legging it over perilously rickety planks that criss-cross the mountainside.



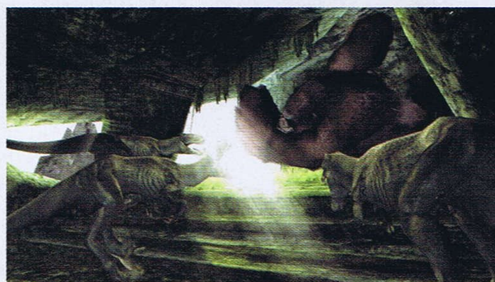
The Kong sections make up around 40% of the game. In the bit we played you have to defend Ann from a bunch of T-Rexes. The feeling of controlling a huge monkey with immense power is very well done particularly when you grapple a Rex, prise its jaws open and break its neck.





Your guns won't work on larger dinosaurs.





Controlling King Kong proves very satisfying.



MARIO KART DS
Handheld, WiFi Mario Kart in beautiful 3D? This is one of the games the DS was made for. The only people that aren't excited by this one are probably in a coma somewhere.
Out: November



POKEMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS (GC)
Touted as the full 3D Pokémon RPG we've all been waiting for, we were worried that it could be very similar to *Colosseum*. Check out our review on page 56.
Out: November

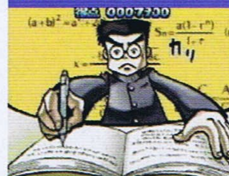
NOW PLAYING

TOM E
MARIO BASEBALL
Nintendo
NGC/111 80%



I love this. It's not a classic, and it falls a bit short in some areas, but one thing is apparent right off the bat – it plays a solid game of baseball and hits the right side of Mushroom Kingdom silliness without ever going over the top.

MARTIN
OSU! TATAKAE! OUENDAN
Nintendo
JAPANESE IMPORT



This is arguably the best thing available on DS right now. It's a touch-screen rhythm game that requires you to get people through life's unfortunate situations through the power of cheerleading. More on this next month.

GERAINT
MARIO KART DS
Nintendo
E3 Demo



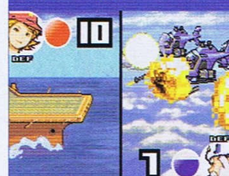
It just feels perfect. Nintendo sent us the E3 demo a little while ago and, even though it hasn't actually got a Time Trial in our version that hasn't stopped us passing the DS around for our own 'write your times on a piece of paper'– style trialling mode. It's so good it's untrue.

PAUL
DAKAR 2
Acclaim
NGC/80 79%



You're going to be hard pushed to find a copy of this, but this overlooked racer, was actually fairly decent. True, you spend most of the time racing all on your own, but the handling of the game was spot on.

THE SIMPSON
ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE
Nintendo
NGC/110 5/5



Advance Wars, then. Everyone's been saying that it's the best strategy game ever made, and having spent all night playing it, I can safely say that I agree with them. It's absolutely brilliant.

ZELDA DELAYED

But the wait's going be worth it…



Just before we went to press Nintendo contacted us to tell us that *Twilight Princess* would not make its intended November 2005 release date – instead Nintendo plan to release the game globally in 2006. A little annoying perhaps, but considering the two year wait we had to endure for *Ocarina of Time*, it's not the end of the world.

"Our development team has decided to take extra time to add some incredible new elements to *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*," said Nintendo in their official statement. "We recognise there may be some disappointed fans, however we firmly believe this additional time will result in a much more enjoyable gaming experience…" Speaking to Nintendo, they explained to us that "both Miyamoto and Aonuma have developed some really amazing new ideas and gameplay elements" and after much deliberation, decided they were "simply far too good to leave out" – hence the delayed release date.

Nintendo have often spoken about their desire to craft the perfect Zelda. In a recent interview, Miyamoto and Aonuma were adamant that *Twilight Princess* would not repeat the 'mistakes' they made with *Wind Waker*. Speaking candidly about Gamecube's cel-shaded classic, they admitted they weren't happy with many elements of the game. In particular, the long-winded Tri-force hunt, the huge expanse of sea they asked gamers to traverse and the lack of dungeons – problems that arose simply because Nintendo wanted to release the game within the original timeframe.

The lack of dungeons was one of *Wind Waker*'s biggest criticisms. Nintendo have listened to this and have promised it won't happen this time ("the new game will have more dungeons. Many more" – as Miyamoto puts it). And if an extra handful of months is what's needed to ensure perfection, then you won't hear us complaining…



HUSTLE AND BUSTLE
The town square is suitably bustling – boasting far more NPCs than ever before (there are around 40 in this image alone). Scenes like this, and the expanse of Hyrule field beyond, suggest we can expect a game far more epic in scale than previous Zeldas.

THE EYES HAVE IT
The use of Link's eyes to track enemies, which originated in *Wind Waker*, is used to even greater effect. Link's facial animations not only alert players to points of interest, but also show his thoughts and emotions in any given situation.



DUNGEON MASTER
Classic Zelda dungeoneering. The Forest Dungeon (pictured) is rich with little details. Dust floats gently through the air and every enemy you encounter is modelled slightly differently, doing away with the armies of identikit clones you usually see. Combat has also been improved, giving Link a substantial repertoire of moves.



CONTINUED



ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE (DS)
The handheld strategy gem now has battles taking place on two screens. We reviewed the US/Jap versions last month and it's the best game on the DS so far.
Out: September 30th



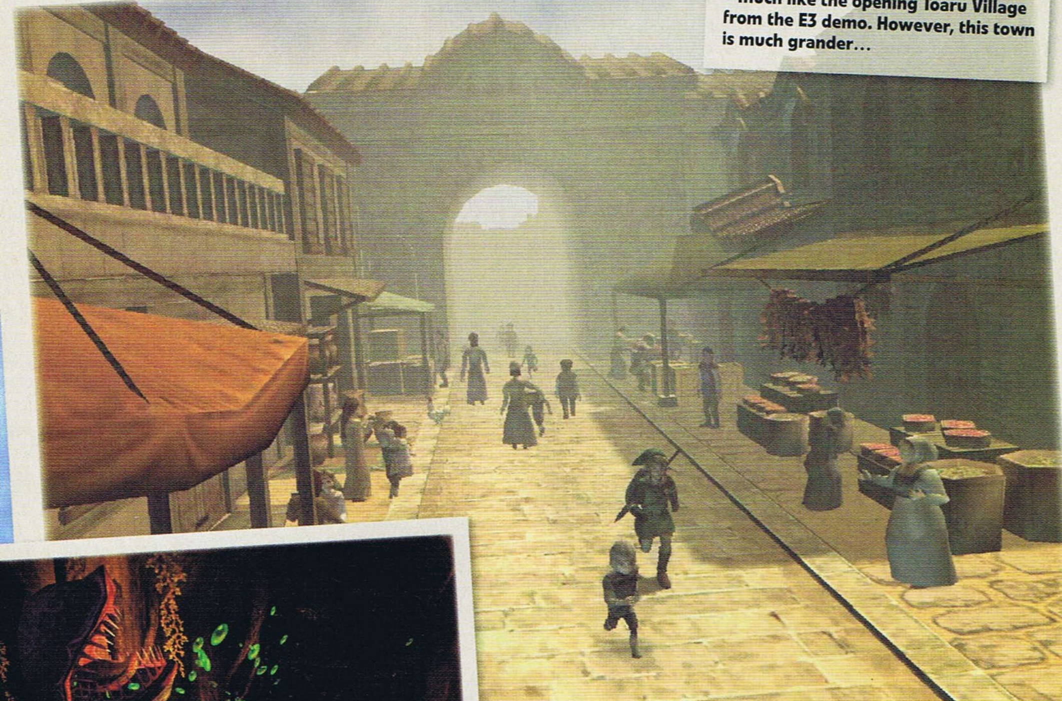
NINTENDOGS (DS)
Rear and train your own incredibly cute cyber-puppies and become emotionally attached to a series of pixels in this charming cute-'em-up. So good it's actually replaced dogs in Japan.
Out: October

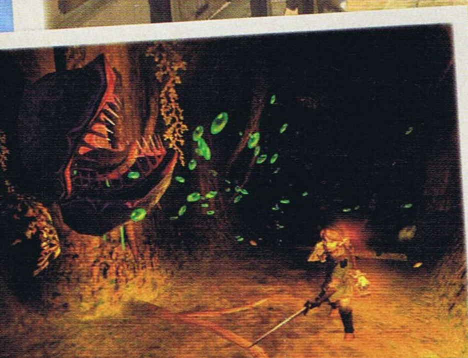




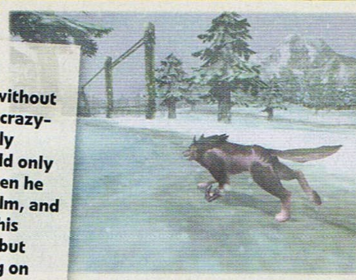
WATER BEAUTY
Now this we like. Sure, a cheeky glimpse at the surrounding environment would be nice, but the cyans and magentas of the delicate underwater textures make this strikingly beautiful. If there isn't a Zora nearby, we'll eat the trousers right off our legs…

TALK OF THE TOWN
Twilight Princess's grittier visual style is much more evident in these new screenshots. Zelda towns are traditionally quaint, jolly little villages – much like the opening Toaru Village from the E3 demo. However, this town is much grander…





BABA BEATINGS
Link whacks the spittle right out of a Deku Baba's mouth. The lantern attached to Link's hip swings around as he fights, casting eerie, real-time shadows on the dungeon walls.



WOLFY
Link in his canine form without so much as a hint of the crazy-eyed Midna. We originally suspected that Link would only evolve into this form when he entered the Twilight Realm, and that Midna would be on his back wherever he went, but this shot proves us wrong on both accounts…



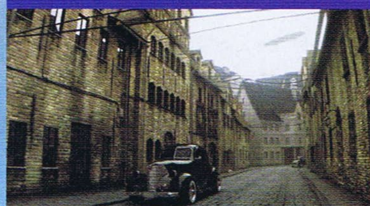
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS (DS)
The first official addition to the Mario Bros series in nearly a decade, this incarnation sees the plumbers reborn in beautiful 2D-yet-3D. We want it. Now.
Out: 2006



POKEMON DIAMOND/PEARL (DS)
Although the developers are remaining tight-lipped on this one, we do know that it will be WiFi enabled and will be compatible with Pokémon GBA carts.
Out: 2006

BEST OF THE NET
Because some people **will** believe anything…





REVOLUTION TECH DEMOS
These images we found of Revolution Tech Demos look nice enough, and we'd be more than happy if Nintendo's new machine was capable of running such highly detailed models and environments in-game, but alas it is a load of rubbish. As well as this, when it comes to making a tech demo, we're pretty sure that Nintendo wouldn't pass up the opportunity to make something truly special and have it brimming over with classic Ninty iconography – perhaps Mario would show up somewhere. Although we're not quite sure who, when and where the Revolution tag got attributed to these screenshots, we do know where they originated from – www.splutterfish.com

TURD 'O' METER



CONCEPT HOOVER
Nothing works better than ambiguity when creating a fake. Make it look like something and people won't believe you; make it look like nothing in particular and people's bemusement will often get the better of them. This particular, er, thing was supposed to have come from a source close to Nintendo and DigiPen – a videogame university (for want of a better description) in the States. Naturally, it's a fake. Something which is made all the clearer by the fact that its creator 'echo_machine' admits to the fact…



TURD 'O' METER



TRUE CRIME NEW YORK CITY

Activision takes the fight to the big apple…

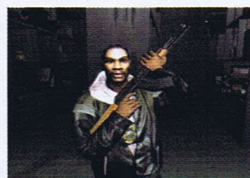

Δ Hopefully there will be more cars to drive and more civilians wandering the streets this time around.

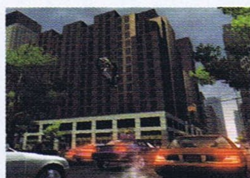
Let's face it, *True Crime: Streets of LA* didn't exactly live up to its GTA-beating promise. Far from it in fact. The city had all the charisma and architectural splendour of Milton Keynes (though you could argue that this actually makes it an accurate portrayal of LA), the streets felt strangely empty and soulless and the overall experience suffered from a shopping list of problems that plagued it from start to finish.

Enter the sequel, with a new city and a fresh start. The change from the bland streets of LA to the infinitely more appealing urban jungle that is Manhattan could well resolve one of our biggest gripes. Freed from the shackles of a sprawling mass of bland, nondescript bungalows, the smaller, significantly more detailed high-rise environment is certainly shaping up to be more spectacular, visually speaking, and the hustle and bustle of city life looks set to be conveyed far better as a result.

> **"DEPENDING ON THE WAY YOU APPROACH THINGS, THE CITY WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT"**



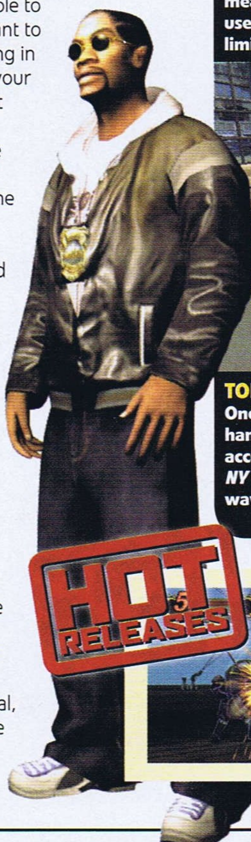



Δ Your character in *TC: NYC* is Marcus Reed, a cop out for revenge after his mentor is killed. Sounds like a Steven Seagal movie…

As before, the good cop/bad cop element will return. Players will be able to choose exactly how they want to uphold the law – by engaging in more civilised arrests, or, if your morals are a little looser, just wading in guns blazing. Interestingly, Activision have said that, depending on the way you approach things, the city will visually change, as waves of crime are either nipped in the bud or allowed to flourish.

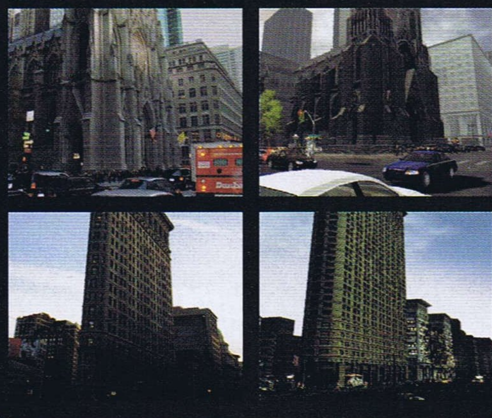
This has always been a good idea in theory, but we found the execution of it lacking in the original, as taking the bad route often made your progression through the game too difficult, making it feel horribly restrictive. Hopefully, developers Luxoflux will take such a criticism on board and open *True Crime* up to allow more freedom of choice.

It's still too early to tell if *True Crime* will actually be able to live up to it's potential, though – something that we can remedy with a hands-on next issue.



SIDE BY SIDE

The level of detail in the city marks a step up from the original. If they can maintain this throughout the game-world, and add plenty of vehicles and civilians (something sorely lacking from *LA*) while keeping the framerate up and the loading times down, we could well be in for a technical marvel.



NEW BITS ON THE BLOCK

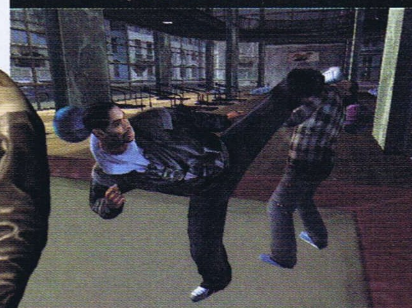
Your guide to the newest parts of True Crime



INTRODUCING
There's a new character in the shape of Marcus Reed, a cop out for revenge after his mentor is killed. It isn't a huge departure from the 'you-killed-my-father' plot of the previous game, but hey…



SMASHING
***TC: NY* features 'environmental interaction' (honestly, who makes this stuff up), which means players can pick up almost anything and use it as a weapon. Hopefully this won't just limit itself to just chairs and bottles.**



TOE TO TOE
One thing we did like about the original was its hand-to-hand combat, which was more accomplished than GTA's system. This time *TC: NY* will expand on this, offering more in the way of weapons and fighting styles.





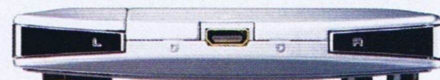
FIRE EMBLEM: PATHS OF RADIANCE (GC)
We can't wait to play the English language version of *Paths of Radiance* – we'll finally be able to figure out what's going on. And how the GBA link-up works…
Out: November



READY FOR LAUNCH

GBA Micro only a couple of months away…



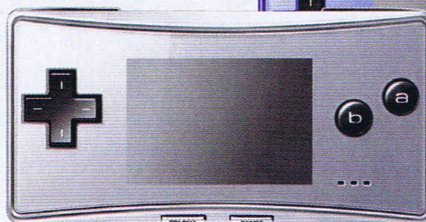


△ If the Micro weren't so damn sexy we'd be complaining about paying for *another* GBA…

Nintendo's lovely pocket-sized portable will finally hit shelves across Europe on Friday November 4th at a not-so-pocket-friendly 99 – around £69.

The unit will come in four colours: pink, green, blue and silver. Nintendo are also planning to release four or five different face plates at the same time, so you can customise it from day one.

Now maybe it's just us, but we feel the price is a little steep for a third generation of technology that's been knocking about for four years now. Especially considering you can pick up a DS for just £20 more. Still, there's no denying it's a sexy little machine…



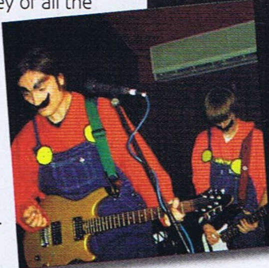
△ As well as the four colours, there will be clip-on fascias available.

Nintendo Nutters

Meet Chain Chomp and the Shy Guys…

Forget Bloc Party, Maximo Park, the Kaiser Chiefs or any of those skinny tie-wearing, floppy-fringed bands, the **NGC** award for best new band of 2006 goes to Chain Chomp and the Shy Guys! Which we reckon must mean more than a Brit Award.

Chain Chomp and the Shy Guys, from Bristol, dress up in Mario outfits, stick on their false moustaches and play a 25 minute medley of all the classic Mario tunes, including *Mario Kart, Mario 2, Mario 3* and many more. In you're lucky they also break away from the Mario theme and play Ken's tune from *Street Fighter*. They often play around the Bristol area, and have a gig planned for September 3rd at The Croft. And while we're here, you just have to check out their website at www.chainchomp.com. It's brilliant.



DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

The music doesn't stop there. We've also discovered a band called Game Over, and they claim to have made a whole new type of music – Nintendo Metal. Unlike Chain Chomp and the Shy Guys, they don't just stick to covering Mario themes and they even add their own lyrics to classic Nintendo tunes like Castlevania's Grim Reaper and Punch Out. However, they haven't exactly put the effort into their looks, so Chain Chomp win the battle of the bands.





BATTALION WARS (GC)
Originally starting life as an incarnation of Advance Wars, Battalion Wars has evolved beyond that. Although we weren't impressed with it at first, it's starting to look very promising indeed.
Out: October



METROID PRIME HUNTERS (DS)
Every DS owner will have played this, and they will tell you just how good it's going to be. To top it off, the graphics are some of the best the DS has seen.
Out: October

NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

Magic moments that bring joy to our hearts…



NO 2: ANIMAL CROSSING

***Animal Crossing* would have been rubbish if it not for the animals. But for us, it's not so much what they do as what they say. Although when Claude painted our roof bright orange while we were away for a weekend, we didn't know whether to laugh, cry or phone The Samaritans.**

The conversations you have with your villagers, well, they're more the stuff of delirium than dinner parties, bordering on the kind of patter that gets you locked up, not chatted up. The characters are impolite, fawning, quirky, self-referential, eccentric and sinister, but they're also very colourful and very clever. Games fall over themselves to be like movies or feature powerful stories, so why do they deliver such pathetic, hackneyed scripts?

***Paper Mario, Superstar Saga* and, obviously, *Animal Crossing* all have the gift of the gab, and it reaps them dividends in terms of character. There's a difference between actually being funny and just putting exclamation marks at the end of each sentence. Talk isn't cheap when you're trying to create a whole other world for people to escape into.**

As for Claude, it's been a while, but we're finally talking again.


Expect this to go straight to the top of the charts…


The gameplay is largely hacking and slashing.


Each of the children has their own attacks to take advantage of.

AIN'T THAT A WITCH

All new Narnia screens…

This is sure to win one at least one award – the longest game name of the year (although it'll be tough between this and *Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go!*). Deep breath, here are some new shots for *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe.*

The first two levels in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion…* (oh sod it) are set in London during a bombing raid and you have to use all four children's skills to escape a burning house. From there you'll be evacuated to the country where you discover the wardrobe and Narnia. From what we've seen it's a bit of a hack 'n' slasher as you go through linear levels fighting against The White Witch's monsters, but there are some puzzles to break up the action and even some driving levels.

Each character has their own attacks – Peter is a bit of a bruiser and has a sword, while the eldest girl, Susan, is a master with a bow and arrow. Edmund is pretty agile and is good for climbing obstacles while Lucy, the youngest child, can heal her brothers and sister. The siblings can also team up for some combo moves.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe is to be released at Christmas, around the same time as the film.


The children are able to team up for some combos and special attacks.

NGC SAYS

Tom East admits it, he's a fanboy.

Like me, anyone who's a massive Nintendo fan runs the risk of coming across as a bit of a fanboy. I know that there's little point in fiercely defending hardware as a means of justifying its purchase to yourself – and I'd never advocate being derogatory to other platforms simply to promote Nintendo – but the fact of the matter is, Nintendo's success is very important to me. Not just as a fan, but as gamer.

Look at the DS as an example. Had it gone the way of Gizmondo it would have been a tragedy – not just for Nintendo, but for the industry as a whole. I wouldn't be able to talk to friends about gems like *Electroplankton* and *Touch! Kirby* because they wouldn't exist, and developers of games like *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!* and *Trauma Centre* (who are settling into the groove of creating new and exciting ways of playing) would never have had the opportunity to create such experiences. What was originally seen as a gimmicky and risky move by Nintendo has opened the floodgates to some genuinely refreshing products - and this is of vital importance, not just to me, but to gaming as a whole.

Looking forward to releases like *Nintendogs*, I find myself almost praying that it goes down a storm in the West just as it has in Japan. Not because I want to see Nintendo get wealthier, but because it serves as an example to other developers to think differently, take risks and break from the norm. It sends a message to people that different doesn't have to mean niche or, god forbid, a flop – and hopefully, it'll go some way to forging a path along which originality is applauded and embraced.



STATE OF PLAY

Just a quick heads up on a huge games convention taking place at the NEC in Birmingham on the 14th, 15th and 16th of October.

The event will give you the chance to get your hands on unreleased games across six different zones. The Hollywood Film Zone (which will be full of licences) Shoot-'em-Up (a booth filled with the latest first person shooters) the FIFA Interactive World Cup (which speaks for itself) along with three more booths dedicated to 'Urban' games – you know, like Tony Hawk's – driving games and a Den, which will be stuffed with gaming's more, ahem, mature content.

If you're interested in going along, you can pick up tickets for £15.00 through www.ticketmaster.co.uk or by phoning 0871 230 5440.

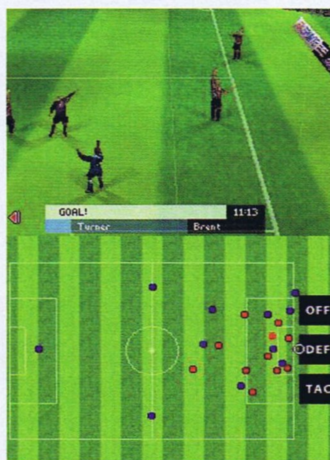
IT'S FIFA DS

The DS's first football game…

After a bit of Chelsea-style tapping up of EA, we've finally managed to get hold of these new *FIFA '06* shots just as we were heading off to the pub… sorry, we meant printers. It's the first football game on DS and it's better looking than Wayne Rooney. Well, it wouldn't be hard…

As always, FIFA will have all the players, leagues and stats from the new season. It will feature wireless multiplayer action, and will use both screens, as you use the bottom screen to bark defensive and attacking commands and make your players take special throw-ins and corners.

FIFA '06 will be released in November, around the same time as the Gamecube version (see preview, p 24).



The bottom screen will be handy.

RESI FOR REVOLUTION?

It shouldn't come as much of surprise to discover that Capcom are already working on *Resident Evil 5* – and as recent shots suggest, it's going to be a real beauty. The only real downer is that, at the moment, it's only scheduled for release on PS3 and Xbox 360.

Before you have a heart attack, we got in touch with Capcom about this and here's what they had to say on the matter. "We have a multi-platform strategy in order to provide Capcom products to as many users as possible. Given this strategy, it is certainly feasible that other platforms could be considered at some point." Not a definite yes then, but at least it wasn't the 'not a chance in hell' we originally expected. Fingers crossed that it comes out on Revolution, then.




"EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM TO LOSE CONTROL"

THE INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION





"A SURE-FIRE SMASH HIT"
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

"DYNAMIC, EASY TO HANDLE AND HUGE AMOUNTS OF FUN TO PLAY"
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PlayStation 2

PLAYED IN JAPAN



Live from NGC's Kyoto office, it's our monthly Nintendo report…



IMPORT NOW!

We bring you the very best of the recent , more obscure releases from Japan…



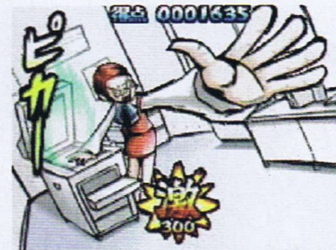
△ *Mushi King* fans have been buying the cards, now they're buying the game.



△ Goemon's DS outing is brilliant. But chances are it won't be released in the UK.



△ The entire Japan League is present, all in big headed, cartoon-style graphics.



△ *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!* is an absolutely mental rhythm game.

MUSHI KING (GBA)

The GBA is still alive and creeping, as Sega's phenomenal new insect battling game proves. *Mushi King* (or *King of the Beetles*) is ingenious, really. You're in charge of an army of beetles and your mission is to develop this crawling army into a fearsome unit of bugs. New recruits from the insect world also compete with varieties of beetles in some huge battles. Before this GBA version there was an arcade game in 2003 and many card games, and the hype machine shifted into top gear with this multiplayer-friendly portable version as 200,000 copies were sold in its first week on sale. In Japan, *Mushi King* is the new conkers. Kids love it.

GOEMON (DS)

Remember the SNES and N64 Mystical Ninja games? Well, the eponymous ninja Goemon returns in this DS adventure and it's right up to scratch. Goemon and his pals journey across Japan to battle with powers from outer space. All the standard Goemon fixtures are here: huge robot battles (now controlled with the stylus), engaging puzzles and curious hula dancing antics. Along with *Another Code*, this is one of the most stylish DS games to date, using minimalist cel-shading to give Edo Japan an attractive, hand-drawn look. And in typical Goemon style, the music is hum-along perfect. Konami really should release this gem outside of Japan.

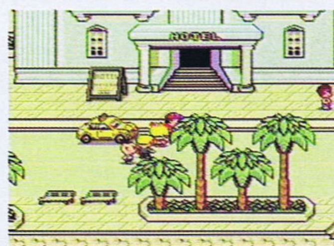
POWERFUL PRO BASEBALL 12 (DS)

Nothing has really changed since *Powerful Pro Baseball 1* on the Super Famicom. But this is still a decent game of baseball, and it's still populated by players with comically oversized noggins. *Mario Baseball* was released at the same time in Japan, and as a result, *Powerful Pro 12* has suffered because Ninty's game is fresher. Still, this is by no means a poor effort. All the teams from the Japan League are here and the stadiums are accurately modelled. *Mario Baseball* has the four-player fun, *Powerful Pro Baseball 12* has the official licences and, um, very large brains.

OSU! TATAKAE! OUENDAN! (GBA)

The TV ads for this rhythm game are an awesome blend of martial arts, dancing and noodles. The game itself is much the same. You tap circles that appear on the touch-screen in time with the J-pop soundtrack while all manner of crazy dance moves are simulated by a group of traditionally-dressed fighters. Other areas of play feature mad stylus twirling to keep the songs flowing. There's multiplayer for up to four DS owners, and a total of 15 songs to work through. It's not an epic, but *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!* is an innovative and fun game. File it alongside *Daigasso! Band Brothers.*





BIG IN JAPAN MOTHER

Maybe you know Mother as Earthbound. Or maybe not. Either way, the dual-named series is legendary in Japan.

Ness was a nifty little character in *Smash Bros Melee*, but far more importantly he's the lead character in Nintendo's legendary Mother games. The first game in the series appeared late in the Famicom's life and a Super Famicom sequel followed in 1994. The third was planned for the 64DD, but it remains in development to this day. A couple of years ago, its final destination was rumoured to be the GBA. But no one knows for sure where it will end up.

Although neither of the Mother RPGs have been released in the UK, the Super Famicom game was translated for the US and sold as *Earthbound*. This is the best version to go for. After a meteor lands next to his house, Ness and chums make their way through Eagleland and beyond to find out the truth about alien life. It's quirky with a capital Q. As an alternative for those who read Japanese, Nintendo recently repackaged *Mother 1 + 2* on a single GBA cart. Essential stuff.





△ These demo pods are always packed with GBA, DS and Cube goodies. And what's better, there's a new demo disc for them released every month.



△ Our local shop in Kyoto, Wanpaku Kozo, seems to be biased towards Nintendo. But there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, is there?

SNAPSHOT

Shopping for games the Japanese way.

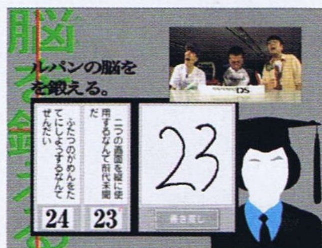
In Japan there are huge chains that are essentially the Japanese versions of GAME and Virgin, but there also many thousands of smaller, independent stores. The local games shop here in Kyoto is called Wanpaku Kozo. Its ground floor is filled with Game Boy, DS, Gamecube and PSone/PS2 games, but there is a bias towards Nintendo, and there's a Gamecube demo pod at the entrance featuring all the latest previews. Upstairs, there are thousands of retro games across all formats. The biggest and most popular areas of the first floor are devoted to the Famicom and Super Famicom. Finally, there's some gachapon machines, which dispense small, plastic figures of your favourite videogame characters.



△ The retro market supports 'new' hardware such as this (slightly dodgy) Famicom rip-off. Hmmm...

EVERYONE'S PLAYING...

GENTLE BRAIN EXERCISES





Yes really, they are...

It's been selling like homemade Chinese copies of J.K. Rowling's latest effort. Although it's not a game as we know it, it's *Gentle Brain Exercises*. Pretty soon, this DS-based brainteaser will have sold over half a million copies, not to mention tens of thousands of pieces of DS hardware. The software is especially popular with older players – it's essentially an elaborate IQ test, intended as a stress-reliever but with stylus control and voice recognition. At the end of the test, you are presented with a chart that breaks down your performance.

In the latest issue of Famitsu Wave DVD magazine, they have a feature that shows a group of people playing *Gentle Brain Exercises* to compete for the illustrious crown of Most Intelligent One. Each individual test is less than a minute long.

It looks like this is a great way to settle arguments, and as Japanese society is built on hierarchy, the Famitsu feature proves *Gentle Brain Exercises* is the perfect hierarchy sorter.



DS ARMOUR

Japanese gamers worried their DS will be crushed on the subway, one peripheral peddler has come up with a novel solution. Check out Keys Factory's DS Protect Armour. For only a fiver (¥980), you can equip your DS with a solid outer shell and at the same time make it look like a Transformer. Next month: how to turn Optimus Prime into a console.

THE BEST FOR REVOLUTION NGC

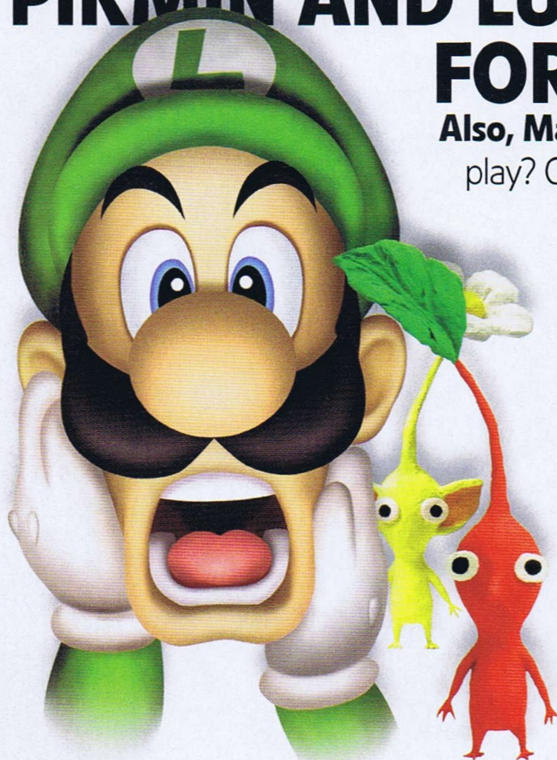


THE REVOLUTION REVIEW

Monday 25 July, 60 Rupees | Hyrule, Mushroom Kingdom, Zebes | **www.hyrulereview.co.hy**

PIKMIN AND LUIGI'S MANSION FOR REVOLUTION?

Also, Mario Party to be enhanced for online play? Get all the latest Revolution gossip here!





It's always good to be blessed by with a handful of Revolution details and Miyamoto and Iwata have been handing out tidbits like sweeties recently. Shigsy has hinted that Pikmin will be making a return on the new console – when talking about the new controller he mentioned that it will use an interface that is well suited to Pikmin. Also, Miyamoto hinted that a follow-up to *Luigi's Mansion* may be in development. Good news, as although the original was short it is still one of the most charming adventures on Gamecube.

Meanwhile, there is also some online gossip. As well as the possibility of DS being able to wirelessly communicate with Revolution, there's also the chance that games from Nintendo's back catalogue – Mario Party, for example – may be enhanced to make them feature online multiplayer functionality. The console won't have an ethernet port, but it will feature a USB adapter.

Finally we've been told that Revolution won't play DVDs out of the box (a decision made on the basis that Nintendo reckons most homes already have a DVD player), but its DVD player peripheral will fit inside the machine to avoid it ruining Revolution's look.

WISHING WELL

What's your most-wanted from Nintendo's CV?

One feature of Revolution that we're all too aware of is its capacity to download games from Nintendo's back catalogue, and we can't help but put together our own wishlists ready for when the software goes live. And we'd like you to join in! Let us know which game you're looking forward to getting your hands on by emailling us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk with Wishing Well as the subject header. Or just send us a good ol' letter to the usual address. We'd like a picture of you, too.



Super Mario RPG
SNES
Tom E.
My first download will have to be *Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars.* Like *Earthbound,* the game never made it out in Europe, and now that I've finally played through both Paper Marios and *Superstar Saga* on the GBA, it would be interesting to go back to the series' spiritual predecessor. It's always bugged me that many of the SNES's best games never made it to these shores. Revolution will mean I can finally catch up.



Earthbound
SNES
Mathew Pellet, Co. Durham
Starring Ness of *SSBM* fame, this fantastic RPG is a must-have for any Revolution owner. After a meteorite crashes near his house in Onett, Ness sets off on a massive quest aided by Paula, Jeff and, um, Poo. With some of the most inventive bosses ever seen, including crazed tents, titanic ants and evil sprouts, I can't wait to lose myself in this acclaimed game that sadly, due to a poor showing in America, was never released Europe.

RETRO STUDIOS OPENS MOUTH...

New Metroid info

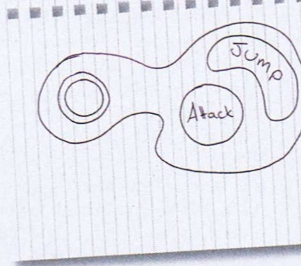
The developers behind the Metroid Prime series spoke to the press this month, and although they gave away as much information as you could fit on the back of a penny, they did tell us that this instalment will be a closure for the series, turning the Metroid games into a trilogy. Hopefully, the final part will be one to rival Return of the King rather than The Godfather Part III. They also let slip a stunning revelation – *Metroid Prime 3* will take advantage of the console's controller. And we were thinking you'd control Samus with your eyes...

CONTROL FREAK

Out-Nintendo Nintendo and win five games!



With Nintendo remaining tight-lipped about the Revolution controller, we thought we'd let you design your own. It can be sensible or mental, but the best one will win five games. We asked Geraint to draw his own, but we're sure you can do slightly better than his effort (pictured left). Send your sketches, prototypes, whatever to us at this address:
Control Freak compo, **NGC**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.
Or, if you'd rather scan in your design or if you've crafted it on a computer, you can email it to ngc@futurenet.co.uk, with the header Control Freak.



△ **Geraint's effort. Well, Ninty did say it would have fewer buttons.**

DREAM TEAM

Rather than create their own storyline for the game, Activision hired writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Mark Bagley – the talent behind the Ultimate Spider-Man comics – to produce an original script and design the characters. The result, as you can see, looks fantastic.

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

A night on the 'toon with the biggest superhero game to date. It's wall-crawlingly good...



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Play as young Spidey in the offshoot Ultimate version of the Marvel universe.
- Free-roaming gameplay in an expanded model of New York.
- More Marvel characters than ever before in a game.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Treyarch

What have they done before?
Spider-Man 2 (NGC/96 84%)
Similar sort of thing but only one playable character and not quite so pretty.



△ Spider-Man perches atop a traffic signal, chucking peanut shells at passing tourists.



△ Some of the redesigned characters are going to come as quite a shock if you're not familiar with the Ultimate universe. Green Goblin could hardly be more different.



△ The map in the corner is in 3D, and you can zoom out to satellite height for an overview of the city. Lovely.



△ Despite his bulbous head, Spidey never loses his balance during these gravity-defying moments.

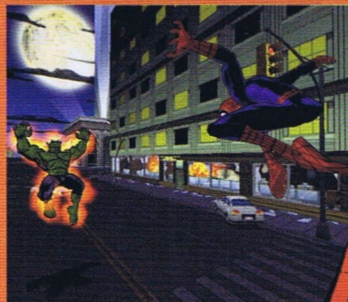
Time waits for no superhero, not even the perennially fresh-faced Spider-Man. Created in 1962 from the bite of a radioactive spider and reimagined via genetic engineering for 2001's Ultimate Marvel Universe, Spidey's ability to move with the times has blessed him with more than 40 years as the world's favourite costumed crimefighter.

No longer a photographer for the Daily Bugle, Peter Parker – the man behind the mask – is a 15-year-old web-slinger with a reassuringly familiar line in wisecracks and gallows humour.

This is the first game based on the phenomenally successful Ultimate Spider-Man comic books, and to distinguish it from the movie-based Spidey titles it uses a new graphical style that the developers insist on calling 3D Comic Inking Technology™, rather than mere cel-shading. Of course…

In action, the game does look incredibly vivid. The characters are shaded with subtle, shiny textures that make them stand out from the colourful New York backdrops, and the use of cutaway panels is every bit as imaginative as Marvel artist Mark Bagley, who was roped in by Treyarch to design the characters for the game.

When an important event happens, such as the grand entrance of a villain



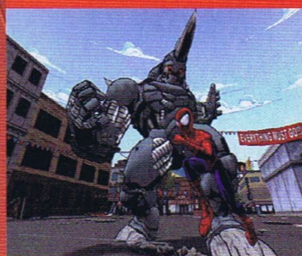
△ Preparing to ride a fireball or two…





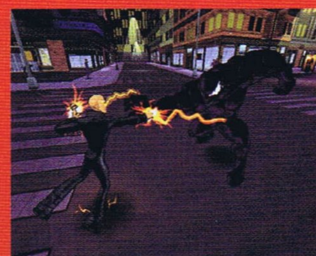
△ In these cutscenes, each comic panel is overlaid on the main game screen and animated in 3D. Spidey is still active in the centre-right panel.

MORE FRIENDLY FACES

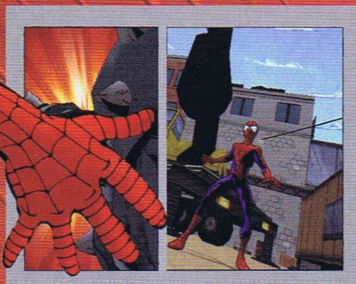

■ Judging by the way Rhino is making the universal 'I will crush you' gesture, he's an enemy. Yup.


■ So what if he looks like the Hulk crossed with Hellboy? This is the Green Goblin, and he's a bit upset.

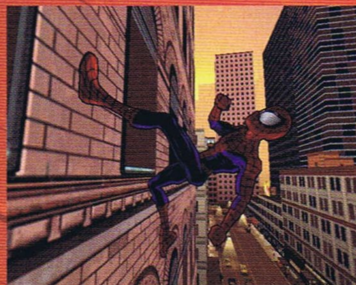

■ Iron Man? Not quite, but you can bet Spidey will be hitching a ride on this flying robo-nutcase.


■ Who's the bad guy here? Ahh, it must be Electro, master of all things electrical – even lava lamps.







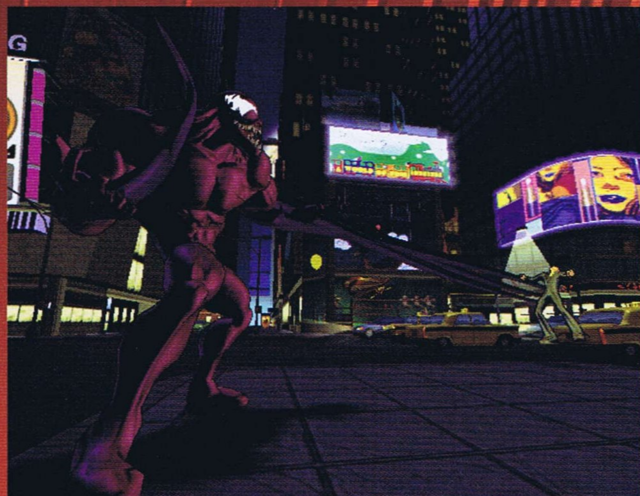

△ As in *Spider-Man 2*, you can run up walls to speed to the top of a building quickly.

or a civilian in distress, the screen splits into separate panels. Sometimes you'll still be playing in one panel while the others show stylised 3D views of characters, complete with *KA-BOOM*-style visual sound effects and artistic camera angles. There are also small inset panels which give hints about useful objects nearby, and story sequences are all portrayed with the visual panache of a 3D Marvel strip. It's by far the best realisation of a comic art style to date.

The gameplay remains similar to *Spider-Man 2*, featuring a large chunk of New York for Spidey to roam in search of random crime. Pressing the right trigger makes our hero shoot a string of webbing onto any nearby structure, which makes for a dizzyingly fast way of swinging high above the streets.

"ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN IS BY FAR THE BEST REALISATION OF A COMIC ART STYLE TO DATE"

Spider-Man's new moves include the ability to climb up the web while swinging, allowing him to reach the top of a skyscraper in a couple of swings. The combat has also been spruced up, with more



△ Venom actually sucks the life out of his enemies (and the odd pedestrian too).



△ Venom, chucking cars as usual.



△ The visual style is amazing.

MEETING MR VENOM

Spidey's slightly evil alter ego started life in the 1980s as a disastrously redesigned costume for our hero. Spider-fans cried so hard, Marvel HQ was submerged beneath a salty lake of tears, forcing Stan Lee to backtrack and give Venom a separate identity as an alien demon. And that's how Spider-Man got his original uniform back.



△ Venom's suit, designed by Peter Parker and his Dad, was meant to be a cure for cancer…





△ It seems that Venom's life-sucking skills aren't working here as he gets pummelled by Electro's, er… electricity.



△ … But the costume turned evil and so you have Venom, shown here killing a pedestrian.

emphasis placed on comic-style fighting. There are more enemies, more chances to use walls and other objects as you swing around the city. As well as these, bonuses are awarded for beating up multiple foes during a shoulder-hopping, web-wrapping combo.

Spider-Man still doesn't actually maim anyone with his incredible strength, but the other playable character is less shy about using his powers. Venom has a health meter which is constantly being drained, so to top it up he uses his stretchy tentacles to suck the life force out of pedestrians.

He can travel almost as quickly as Spidey, but by leaping from wall to wall rather than swinging. Each impact leaves a little crater, and you can easily spot Venom's route by the trail of destruction he leaves in his wake. Get down to street level and Venom can start flinging parked cars into oncoming traffic, just for the fun of it. It's what we'd do if we had super powers.

The two characters have specific missions, so you can only switch between them at certain times. We played boss battles featuring Venom against Electro and Spidey versus Rhino, plus assorted bits of random fighting and city-exploration. While it would be nice to be able to swap characters at will, the different feel of swinging with Spidey and smashing with Venom make either one a treat to play. We're also promised loads of enemies from the Marvel universe, including some not previously seen in the Ultimate comics, in what should be the best superhero game so far. Ⓝ

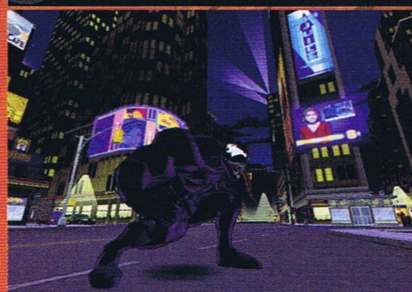
MEDDLING IN MAYHEM



When your Spider Sense tells you danger is nearby, it's time for a spot of button-mashing hero action. Here (and in several other places) you have to squeeze the triggers as fast as you can, thereby saving an innocent civilian from Rhino's inconsiderate car-throwing ways. The litter lout…

NGC VERDICT

UK OCT 14 | US SEPT | JAPAN TBA



With Spider-Man firmly established as the number one Marvel videogame franchise, we're expecting something pretty special from this. It's spectacular to watch and very slick to play – if you could plug a controller directly into a comic book, this is what it would be like. The beautiful graphics and huge, loading-free city mean it chugs occasionally, but not to a ruinous extent.

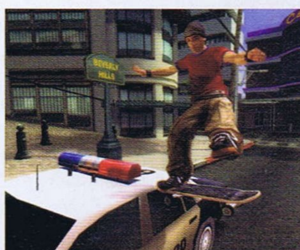
ANTICIPATION RATING



CLOCK WATCHING

As you skate around the city in search of challenges, the sun will set and new characters will appear after dark. Cloaked by the night, you can spray personalised obscenities on the sides of buildings.





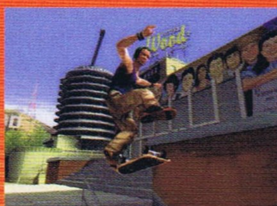




△ Traditional skateparks are dotted around the city. You can enter contests at these places, if you've got a good enough haircut.

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

The only skateboarder most people have heard of, in his most impressively vast skateboarding game…



THE KNOWLEDGE

- **The biggest skateboarding game in the entire history of skateboarding games.**
- **Few Jackass antics.**
- **Dual-analogue BMX action.**
- **Giant Los Angeles play area.**

FACTFILE

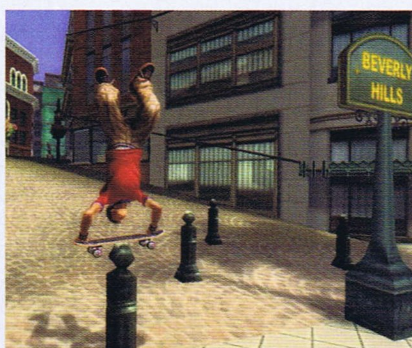
Who's making it?

Neversoft

What have they done before?

Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (NGC/100, 82%)

Make skating your career while Bam Margera acts like an idiot.



△ You can do a brand new spinny move on this post. Other posts, too, but this one's the best.


Having shifted around 29 million units, Tony Hawk remains one of the biggest names in videogaming. Apparently he can skate a bit, too, but only on Sky.

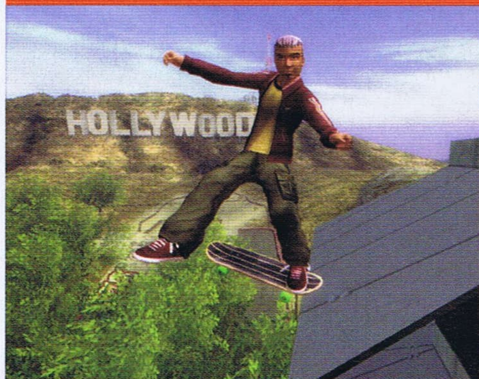
For this latest game, Neversoft are taking the series 'back to its roots'. Which means no more cars, no more crazy vehicles and no more Bam Margera. Stepping off the bus at the start of the game you play a wannabe skate hero, just arrived in Los Angeles, with a big reputation ahead of him.

The city is huge, and once you've unlocked all the different sections you can skate from downtown LA all the way to an oil rig beyond Santa Monica. Granted, the whole thing is stylised and compressed to make it actually fun

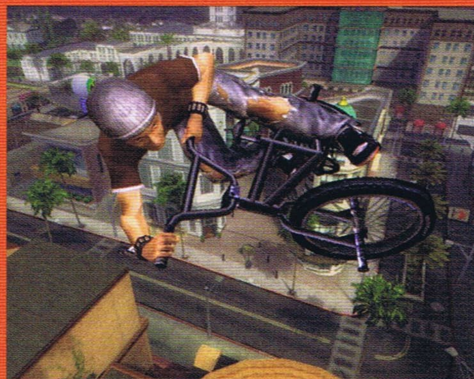
> **"SKATE FROM DOWNTOWN LA ALL THE WAY TO AN OIL RIG BEYOND SANTA MONICA"**

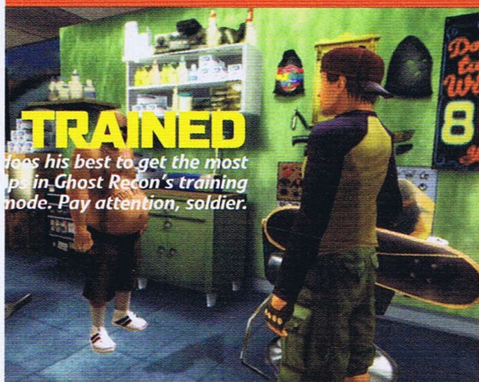
WASTELAND?

It's definitely American, but we've no idea where the Wasteland part comes in. Anyway…

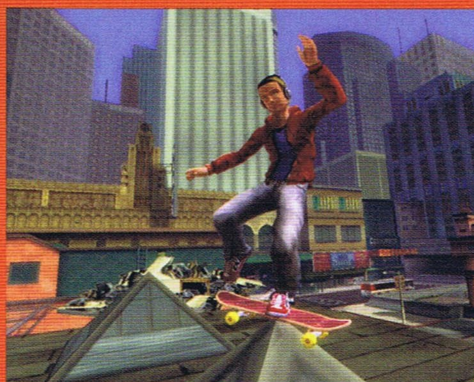


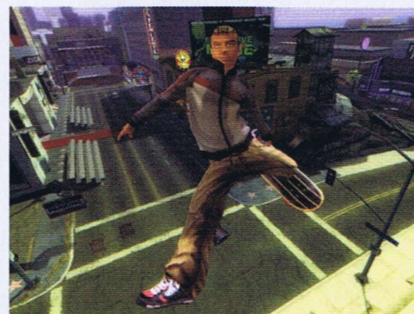
■ Seeing the sights, Hawk-style. There are a few noteworthy LA landmarks, but this bloke has just ruined somebody's photo of the Hollywood sign.


■ The BMX could hardly be more different from the familiar skateboard. Thankfully it's the only other vehicle – there are no cars or rocket-powered donkeys.

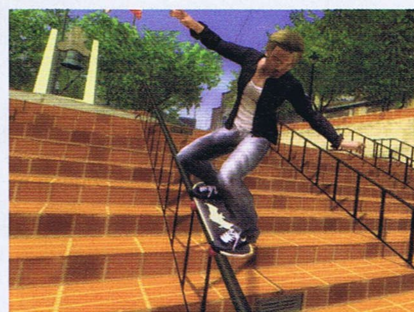


■ The very first thing you do in the game is get a haircut and buy some new clothes – all to impress a girl who looks like a Klingon wearing a comedy punk wig.


■ Los Angeles is made out of cheap plastic and recycled cardboard, with a big engine in the middle for spewing out toxic fumes. Find it and grind it, skateboy.


△ Sadly, the game doesn't reward foolhardy skaters for plummeting to their deaths.


△ The stylised streets of Los Angeles offer plenty of things to skate, jump and fall off.


△ Scraping the paint off a handrail is one of many ways to amuse yourself in the city of smog.


△ Spin the C-stick to spin your bike and pull some 'wickety' stunts.


△ Frankly, this sort of thing is very dangerous. And quite naughty, too.

to play, but it's an impressively large, loading-free area.

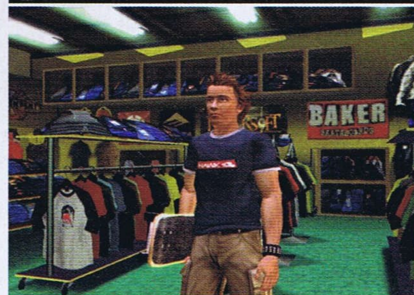
New moves have been added to the trusty skateboard, so you can 'surf' the streets like a 1970s skate pioneer, and there's also the option of using a BMX. Your first biking task is to ride for 30 seconds without falling off, which shows how completely alien it feels. It will take absolutely ages to master the dual-analogue controls, but one of the game's development team demonstrated to us that it *is* possible. We'll just have to keep working at it.

As you complete missions, parts of LA get added to your own personal skate ranch – a place that seems pretty much the size of an entire level from the last game in the series. As well as this, if you're not interested in acquiring your own rollercoaster, it's possible to play it just like one of the original Tony Hawk games, with S-K-A-T-E letters to collect and a timer for each level.

Hawk fans could potentially lose jobs, friends and partners with the amount of time it's going to take to complete this beast of a skate sim. We'll do our best to scratch the surface in time for a review… Ⓝ

NGC VERDICT

UK OCT 28 | US OCT | JAPAN TBA



Extreme sports just got extremely big. We played for an hour or so, using a level skip to get to places such as a casino (with laser beams on the floor) and an oil rig, and saw maybe one neighbourhood-worth of Los Angeles. We're told you can complete the whole thing using just one mode of transport, or switch between board and bike for variety. That's a nice touch.

ANTICIPATION RATING



RUDI AWAKENING

Our first game was against an all-star dream team. Clive Tyldesley said something like 'if you were to pick a dream team, it would be this'. And then we saw West Germany's Rudi Voller up front. He's hardly the best striker ever.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Clive Tyldesley and Andy Gray commentate. Annoyingly Tyldesley shouts "ERIC CANTONA" every time the Frenchman touches the ball.
- Rooney and Ronaldinho are on the box. Rooney's a big FIFA fan.
- 21 leagues and 10,000 players.
- There's a brand new create-a-player mode.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
EA

What have they done before?
FIFA 2003 (NGC/75 83%)
A remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football. This was a massive leap forward for FIFA games.



△ The keepers are good, but you can easily mess things up by bringing them out of their goal at the wrong moment.

FIFA '06

Gamecube's best football series returns for the new season. Your chance to stop Chelsea winning...

Gone are the days when you used to just tap the shoot button and the ball would curl majestically into the top corner for the winning goal in an 11-10 thriller. These days you'll find it hard to score when you've only got the keeper to beat. And you're Thierry Henry.

See, FIFA has long-since departed from the arcade action of old, and this could well be your most sim-like experience yet. In our first play of *FIFA '06* we found it tough to take Michael Owen on a mazy dribble past the Northern Ireland defence, and the one time we found a way past the centre back, Colin Murdoch, the equally incredible Maik Taylor clawed the ball away. Of course the Irish scored with their first shot of the match.

So anticipating a depressing defeat, we pushed the ball out to Beckham, got a cross in and Rooney headed home. After an hour's play, we found crossing and heading was by far the easiest way to score goals. Having said that, there is still an art to crossing, and unlike most football games, you can easily power-up your cross too much and the ball will sail over your striker's head and out of play for a throw in.

Anyway, once you've played a bit more and have the got the shooting sorted you can have a more balanced game. Back in the old days it was end-to-end pinball action as Gary Neville could take the ball from right back, do a few stepovers, beat an entire team of internationals and score.

That's not the way to play *FIFA '06* – it's now more important than ever to patiently build your moves from the back, passing it around until you see your striker make a run behind the full back before playing a perfect through ball. You can pull off some sexy moves, but try to dribble through an entire defence and you'll probably be tackled. Also, older players like Zidane are slower, and it is hard to beat anyone for pace when you've got the ball. You could say this is very realistic, but then you see Northampton's centre backs passing the ball, Ferdinand-style, across the back four rather than humping the ball up to the big number nine. What a load of cobblers.

One thing is for certain, it all looks more realistic than ever. As always, all the kits and stadiums are in place, and the player's faces are incredibly lifelike – Wayne Rooney is looking particularly nice. Well, you know what we mean.

It's not all cosmetic though – there's a nice new touch when the ball is going

> "IT'S NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO BUILD YOUR PASSING MOVES FROM THE BACK"



△ Ameobi heads home for Newcastle.



△ It looks easier to score. It isn't.


△ After messing around trying to score a great goal, we whipped a cross over and Huckerby scored. With his head. Now that is unbelievable.






△ Get used to low scoring games.


△ Directing your shots is difficult.


△ Still 0-0, as the keeper tips over.


△ The keeper animations are absolutely amazing.


△ Rab Douglas makes another astonishing save.

FIFA LOUNGE

The FIFA lounge is great until you have to play FIFA 94. At least it proves that FIFA has got better. Lots better.


■ In the Lounge you can watch loads of classic goals. From Rooney's first goal for Everton (get your hankies out Toffees fans) to Beckham's halfway liner and our favourite, Tony Yeboah's screamer for Leeds.


■ After watching the great goals, it all goes wrong when you play *FIFA 94*. We know it's old, but it's so jerky! And that camera angle seemed revolutionary at the time, but you can't see where you're going.

YOU'LL MANAGE



This amount of work would make most Premiership managers weep. In Career mode not only do you have to pick the team, but you've got to sort out sponsors, make sure you're making money and negotiate the financial side of transfers. You would have thought that as the manager of a top side, you'd have chief executives and marketing managers to sort out the boring financial stuff. Still, messing around in the transfer market is fun.

out of play, as your player can now slide in and hook his foot around it to keep it in. Also, players can hold the ball up much better by turning their backs on defenders and shielding. And if you can't keep the ball by fair means you can always elbow bothersome full backs who are chasing you down the line.

Talking of foul play, you will have to watch out for the refs. Fed up of watching Northampton passing the ball around the back? Try to take it off them with a sliding tackle and more often than not, you'll mistime your challenge and end up in the book.

Obviously there are millions of players, leagues and every tournament from the LDV Vans to the FIFA Club Championship, but you'd expect that from any FIFA game. You might not expect this slowed down, more considered approach. 



NGC VERDICT

UK OCT | US OCT | JAPAN TBC



As with all FIFA games, this looks pretty nice, especially when you get close-ups of the (better looking) players and see all the detail in the stadiums and kits. Scoring goals is tough, but you wouldn't want to go back to the ridiculously high-scoring arcade action of old. And in any case, you've got *FIFA Street* for that sort of thing.

ANTICIPATION RATING



DARK CITY

The epic portrayal of Babylon as a massive, beautiful city beset by the horrors of war is no accident. This setting was chosen as the perfect place to end the Prince of Persia trilogy. The Babylon you see in the game was inspired by several North African cities, like Cairo, Marrakech and Casablanca.



△ The tone is a bit lighter this time.

△ As with the previous games, expect plenty of leaping about on platforms and fiddling with time.

PRINCE OF PERSIA KINDRED BLADES

Prince of Persia ditches the goths and thongs and goes for an epic scale…



THE KNOWLEDGE

- The final part of the trilogy.
- Dual-character system with the normal Prince and his evil alter ego, the Dark Prince.
- All new chariot driving sections that see you crashing through the city of Babylon.
- Brand new speed kill moves for the stealthier option.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Ubisoft

What have they done before?
Prince of Persia Warrior Within (NGC/102 88%)
A darker, combat orientated adventure, high in action but somewhat low in atmosphere.

Kindred Blades begins where *Warrior Within* left off (assuming you got the good ending, that is) with our hero returning home with Kaileena. But all is not well. He finds his city ravaged by war and is soon captured by a kingdom that's turned against him. His only hope is to unleash the Sands of Time and escape. Not only is he a fugitive in his own land, but his past battles and exploits have given birth something much more sinister – a dark alter ego called the Dark Prince who threatens to consume him from within.

Cue lots of wall-running, jumping, time-reversing and enemy hacking. Except things are a bit more polished and refined this time around. Despite being amazing in the previous games, the animation has again been improved – with more fluidity and subtlety to the prince's movements.

The freeform fighting also returns, with more moves and weapons at your disposal and, even better, there's the introduction of speed kills, which are essentially stealth kills. The Prince can crouch, sneak up on enemies when their backs are turned, and deliver various moves that will decapitate and eviscerate an enemy with one hit. They're brutal, sound pleasingly crunchy, and they give the player the option to approach combat in a completely different way.

These are all welcome additions, but it's the setting of the game that really impresses. If the original is the atmospheric one and the second is the dark one, then the third is going to be the epic of the trilogy.

Like *King Kong*, this is another of Ubisoft's more promising games, and a clear indication that their internal development studios are an exceptionally talented bunch. You only need one look at the rooftop sections to see what we mean – if you stand on top of a house and look at the view, your jaw will hit the floor. For miles into the distance a besieged Babylon is burning, smoke billowing into the air, obscuring the hazy sunset on the horizon and enveloping the base of the Tower of Babel. It's truly impressive in scope, and even though you can't go where you want, there's a much better sense of freedom. You don't feel confined to the cavernous temples and corridors that were the mainstay of the previous game.

Unfortunately, Ubisoft are still cagey about a lot of the details, but you can expect plenty of new features as well as the return of Farah…

> "DESPITE BEING AMAZING IN THE PREVIOUS GAMES, THE ANIMATION HAS AGAIN BEEN IMPROVED"


△ The city of Babylon is an awesome piece of game design. Although the game isn't completely free roaming, it still looks spectacular.




△ There are a loads of new moves available, as well as an all new playable character – your alter ego, the Dark Prince.

TRAINED

There have been a couple of additions to your abilities in this instalment. Here's your guide to your new skills.


■ An element of stealth has been added to the game this time around. If you can sneak up to the enemy unnoticed, you can now execute a speed kill. These kill the enemy instantly in a suitably gory fashion.


■ You are also able to pull off special speed kills by using the environment. These kills are shown in through incidental cutscenes and look absolutely amazing. The speed kills look like they will add depth to the gameplay.

NGC VERDICT

UK NOV | US NOV | JAPAN TBC



We've been hugely impressed by what we've seen. Ubisoft have raised the bar with some truly epic environments. It's also nice to see Prince of Persia evolving into a happy medium between the first two games. It keeps the atmosphere of the original, but expands and improves upon the combat of *Warrior Within*.

ANTICIPATION RATING



THE X-FACTOR

The X-Men comic first appeared way back in 1963, starring Professor X, Cyclops, Iceman, Angel, Beast and Marvel Girl. The series ran until 1969, and was resurrected in 1975 with Cyclops, Sunfire, Thunderbird, Banshee, Colossus, Storm, Nightcrawler and Wolverine.





Battles are fast and frantic, with decent special effects.



One of the 70+ free-roaming zones you'll be exploring.



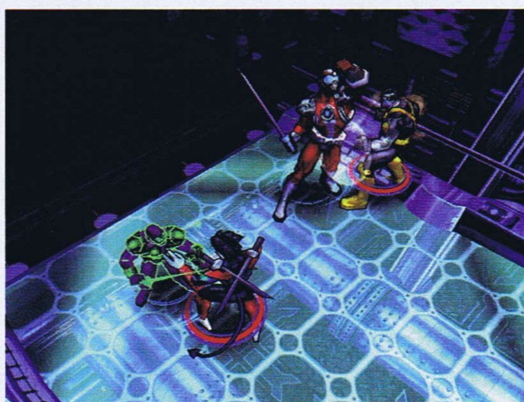
THE KNOWLEDGE

- 16 playable characters.
- Select X-Men heroes or Brotherhood villains.
- Costumes taken from various points in Marvel history.
- Over 100 types of enemy.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Raven

What have they done before?
Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast
(NGC/75 67%)
Disappointing conversion of a big but overrated PC shooter.



Characters have their signature powers from the comics.



The visual style reminds us of a SNES game made in 3D.

X-MEN LEGENDS 2 RISE OF APOCALYPSE

DNA-twisting fun at the school for the genetically advantaged.

While real human mutants tend to have nothing more remarkable than the occasional sixth toe or the odd shock of wiry ginger hair, things are a little different in the wonderful world of Marvel.

Which is definitely a good thing, as *X-Men Legends 2* would be a far less interesting proposition if it starred the likes of Jellyskull – the boy who can change the pitch of his voice by pressing a soft patch in the middle of his head.

This game features proper mutants with proper mutant powers, like the ability to fire lasers out of their eyeballs – now *that's* useful. And there are 16 of them to choose from in this follow-up to last year's thoroughly enjoyable RPG beat-'em-up.

You choose a team of four to send on an expedition, and combine their powers to generate a mind-boggling number of different combos – more than 1,000.

Unsurprisingly enough, the game sticks closely to the original's template, the developers opting for bigger, better and more rather than any major gameplay changes. It's a take on the superhero genre that suits the X-Men characters extremely well, and is going to go down a treat with the fans.

> "PROPER MUTANTS WITH THE ABILITY TO FIRE LASERS OUT OF THEIR EYEBALLS"

NGC VERDICT

UK OCT | US OCT | JAPAN TBA



It's like *Gauntlet* with superheroes and lovely graphics. All rather nice, and clearly created by X-Men enthusiasts – it's filled with subtle touches that only long-term readers of the comics are going to spot. The last game was decent, so X-Men fans should be looking forward to this.

ANTICIPATION RATING



GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2005





△ Marjory Dawes was last year's presenter. But who will it be this year? There's only one way to find out…

Quite possibly the only awards ceremony that doesn't involve girls blubbing behind a lectern, and stuffy old men babbling for an hour about how their goldfish gave them the inspiration for such a wonderful performance…

Yup, it's that time of the year where games industry types get together, give themselves pats on the back and (if they're lucky) win a shiny stick for a job well done. The big difference is that the recipient of these awards are chosen by you, the gamer.

Have a butchers at the whopping list to the right there and text your nominations for each of the categories. If your choice wins, you'll feel the warm fuzzy glow you get from knowing that not only were you right, you were pretty clever too. Result.

- GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR
- PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR
- HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR
- XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR
- PC GAME OF THE YEAR
- ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR
- BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005
- BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005
- PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR
- RETAILER OF THE YEAR
- INNOVATION OF THE YEAR
- THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS
- THE ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006
- ULTIMATE GAME OF 2005
- HERO OF 2005
- VILLAIN OF 2005
- THE GIRLS' CHOICE FOR 2005
- EDITOR'S GAME OF THE YEAR
- UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR



△ If you want *Fantastic 4* to win the Best Film-Based Game award, get voting.

Want to know more? Of course you do. Then surf on over to the Golden Joystick website to register your votes at www.goldenjoystick.co.uk and let's get this mother off the ground!

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

"The Carphone Warehouse is the UK's largest mobile communications retailer with over 600 stores nationwide. We stock the widest range of mobile phones and accessories and customers can make the most of their mobile with the latest ringtones, games and downloads from Playmobile.

We will be extending our range of entertainment products with the launch of the PSP (PlayStation portable) in September and are excited to be stocking this new product in selected Carphone Warehouse stores.

As a result we are delighted to sponsor The award for the of Handheld Game of the Year, it provides us with a great opportunity to raise our profile and brand awareness within the gaming market."

Handheld game of the year? That's easy for us to answer. *Advance Wars DS, Advance Wars DS, Advance Wars DS…*

HOW TO VOTE

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You can be part of this year's Golden Joystick Awards by voting NOW for your favourite categories! Can we top the 200,000 votes recorded last year? Remember, it's up to you!

HOW TO VOTE…

It's easy! Simply text the two letter code that corresponds to the category you want to vote for, plus your chosen favourite to 80889. Don't forget to put a space between the code and your choice.

Example: If you think *Resident Evil 4* was the best Gamecube game of the year, then text: VB Resident Evil 4 to 80889 – don't forget to leave a space before you put in your favourite!

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VB & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE GAMECUBE GAME TO 80889

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VA & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE PLAYSTATION 2 GAME TO 80889

HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VC & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE HANDHELD GAME TO 80889

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VD & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE XBOX GAME TO 80889

PC GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VE & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE PC GAME TO 80889

ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VF & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE ONLINE GAME TO 80889

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005
TEXT: VG & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE FILM BASED GAME TO 80889

BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005
TEXT: VH & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE GAME SOUNDTRACK TO 80889

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VI & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE PUBLISHER TO 80889

RETAILER OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VJ & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE RETAILER TO 80889

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR
TEXT: VK & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE INNOVATION TO 80889

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS
TEXT: VL & THEN YOUR ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS TO 80889

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006
TEXT: VM & THEN YOUR ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006 TO 80889

ULTIMATE GAME OF 2005
TEXT: VN & THEN YOUR ULTIMATE GAME OF 2005 TO 80889

HERO OF 2005
TEXT: VO & THEN YOUR HERO OF 2005 TO 80889

VILLAIN OF 2005
TEXT: VP & THEN YOUR FAVOURITE VILLAIN TO 80889

THE GIRLS' CHOICE FOR 2005
TEXT: VQ & THEN YOUR GIRLS CHOICE TO 80889

WIN A FABULOUS ALL-INCLUSIVE VIP TRIP FOR TWO TO THE AWARDS CEREMONY AND PARTY IN A TOP LONDON HOTEL
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For your chance to win all you have to do is answer the question that will be sent to you following your vote.

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Texts cost 50p per message plus your standard operator cost.
Service supplied by MediaCat Ltd, Grindhall, Woodend Green, Henham, Herts, CM22 6AY.
You may also vote by visiting www.goldenjoystick.co.uk

The prize is for a winner and their guest (one person must be over 18) to attend the Golden Joystick Awards on 4th November 2005 at the London Hilton, Park Lane and then the aftershow party plus one night's accommodation. The winner must provide his or her own transport.

SCOOBY-DOO! UNMASKED

The original snoop dog is back.

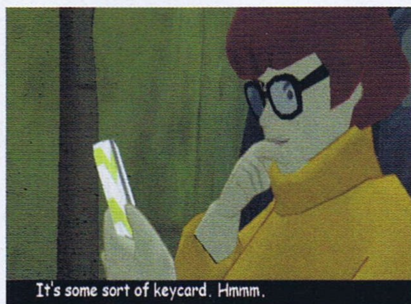




Despite the previous pair of Scooby Doo games earning themselves depressing scores somewhere in the region of 30%, the ever-hungry, spectre-sniffing mutt is back for even more platforming action.

This time around, the plot is typical derring-Doo, as Scooby and his upright companions visit the gloomy home of a film set designer, whose animatronic monsters are running (and wobbling) out of control. Scoobs will get to play dress up, switching between bat, ninja and Robin Hood costumes to add some colour to his jump 'n' thump gameplay.

What we've played feels completely harmless, bar the odd genuinely witty wisecrack and piece of funny animation. As a result it looks like *Scooby Doo Unmasked* is going to be a decent enough adventure – a passable Scooby-snack for fans, but a safe, unexciting non-event for anyone who knows their Wario from their Mario.



△ Rraggy, Rrelma, Daphree, Reddy. They're all here.



△ You can make meals at Shaggy's kiosk.



△ The Robin Hood costume enables you to shoot plungers.

CRASH TAG TEAM RACING

Crash Bandicoot's racer is more than just Super Mario 'Coot.



We had expected that *Crash Tag Team Racing* would borrow from Mario Kart pretty heavily, but there's more to it than that as you get to explore the game-world on foot, much like in *The Simpsons: Hit 'n' Run.*

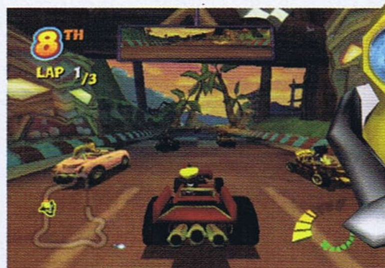
Unearthing the collectables splashed around this world is just as important as the racing, but it's far from tough – the areas we double-jumped our way through were pushovers.

The races themselves are simple, accessible and standard karting fare, but the ability to join your vehicle with another causes some very welcome chaos.

It's a welcome break to be able to piggyback another driver and have them guide you through a tricky section on auto-pilot, but when you eject your partner, you'll be boosted forward. It's a devious tactic when you're in second, and it could mean you'll never feel safe at the front of the pack. But maybe that's the point…







△ *Tag Team Racing* is ticking all the usual Crash Bandicoot boxes. Watch this space.



△ You can unlock oodles of extras by exploring the game-world.



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How to vote...

It's easy! Simply text the two letter code which corresponds to the category you want to vote for, plus your chosen favourite to 80889. Don't forget to put a space between the code and your choice.

EXAMPLE: If you think Tekken 5 was the best PlayStation 2 game of the year, then text : VA Tekken 5 to 80889 – don't forget to leave a space before you put in your favourite!

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THE GIRL'S CHOICE FOR 2005
TEXT: VQ & THEN YOUR GIRLS CHOICE TO 80889

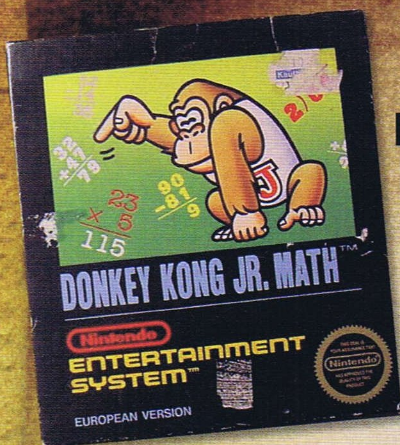


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SPONSORED BY...







DONKEY KONG JR MATH

NINTENDO (1985)
Then: £40 Now: £60

School lessons passing themselves off as electronic 'entertainment'. This is the same NES game that you can unlock in *Animal Crossing.* You play as a young ape tortured with endless vine-climbing until he (and you) has been brainwashed into understanding the concepts of multiplication and division. *Donkey Kong Jr Math* failed utterly to raise the heart rate of a nation of children whose eyes were shaped like TVs. Still, if you've got a copy, try to work out what one rare cart multiplied by thousands of desperate collectors adds up to.

AS RARE AS: cracking open a boiled egg and finding a tiny little dinosaur inside.



MIRACLE PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS (1990)
Then: £300 Now: £300

Duck Hunt-style shootouts and characters called Roboman controlled with piano keys? They're not fooling us: this is educational. This was an expensive box of 'edutainment' that included a full-size keyboard and a NES cartridge able to detect your fingering and congratulate/reprimand you accordingly. This is just the kind of non-gaming NES present that would lead to Santa-directed profanities on Christmas morning. Random fact: its codename during development was, bizarrely, 'Mothra'.

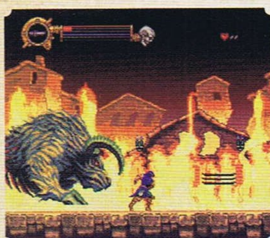


AS RARE AS: someone actually shaving as carelessly as they do in the Gillette ads.

RARE

PEOPLE PAY SILLY MONEY FOR RARE GAMES, SO

Whip your mouse pointer around eBay on any given day and you'd be forgiven for thinking every Nintendo game and accessory ever made is 'L@@K!! **!!!RARE!!!'** But if you're a serious collector – the type that would dance like Ricky Gervais in front of the bank manager if it meant getting the cash for a sealed copy of the original *Metroid* – you'll know that there are precious few items that are actually rare. If you reckon you've got one of these Nintendo holy grails in your attic, we'd really like to make you our new best bud. Is that all right, best bud? You're brilliant.





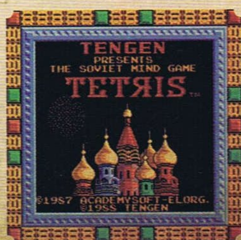
CASTLEVANIA: DRACULA X

KONAMI (1995)
Then: £50 Now: £100

A Super Nintendo game originally released on NEC's much more powerful PC Engine, this was a botched attempt to squeeze a whole CD's worth of game onto one of Nintendo's cartridges. Starring a hero who moves like one of those Olympic speed walkers and can't so much as look at a skeleton without falling off a platform, *Dracula X* is rare simply because it was rubbish. The boxart looking like the cover of some kind of Marilyn Manson/Justin Timberlake crossover album probably didn't help much, either.



AS RARE AS: making a tower of more than 1.2m at the Pizza Hut salad bar without the tomato falling off.

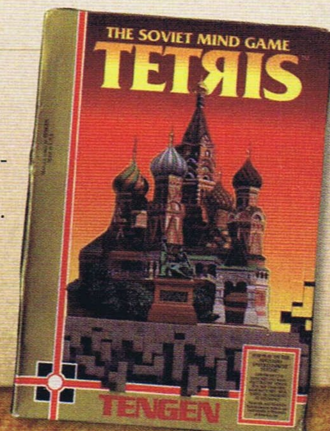


TENGEN TETRIS

TENGEN (1989)
Then: £40 Now: £100

Wrenched off the shelves after a complex and hypnotic Dance of the Lawyers involving Nintendo itself, Tengen's NES version of *Tetris* was on sale for just 31 days. Coded by Ed Logg of *Asteroids* fame (ask your dad), it's considered much better than any of Nintendo's versions by some people. That's people who get woken up at 3am by a kick in the ass and an ogre-like Vice-President of Marketing standing over them with a clipboard.

AS RARE AS: gaining the power to speak to pigeons, and finding they have something interesting to say.

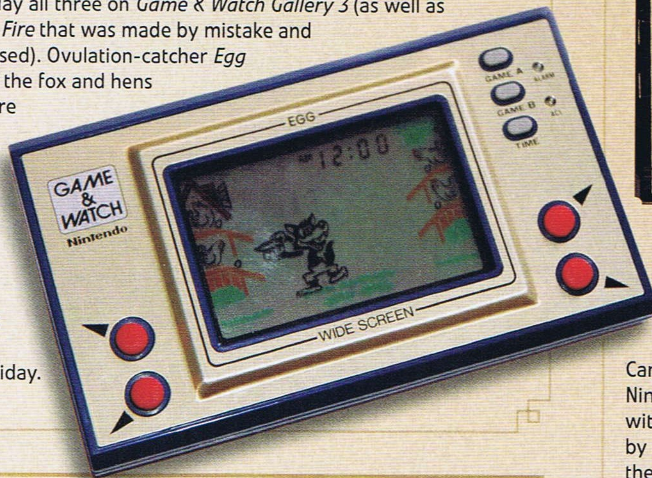


GAME & WATCH: LIMITED RUNS

NINTENDO (1981)
Then: £20 Now: £1600

Take your pick from *Flagman, Judge* or *Egg* – they're all Game & Watches which left the Nintendo factory in quantities less than 250,000, and are worth a tower of notes today. You can play all three on *Game & Watch Gallery 3* (as well as a 'mirrored' version of *Fire* that was made by mistake and apparently never released). Ovulation-catcher *Egg* is the most fun, even if the fox and hens look more like they were fished out of a rubbish skip at the back of Disney Studios than squeezed out of the Nintendo hive brain.

AS RARE AS: the sun expanding and heating the UK to 5 million degrees. On a bank holiday.



WARE

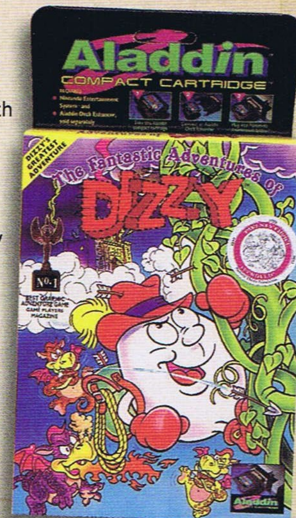
YOU COULD BE SITTING ON A GOLD MINE.



ALADDIN DECK ENHANCER

CAMERICA (1993)
Then: £40 Now: £50

Canadian company Camerica had a habit of giving Nintendo a case of the rage. They upset The Big N once with their Game Genie code-entering tool, then again by distributing unlicensed games, and then went for the hat-trick with this accessory that plugged into the NES and accepted unofficial 'compact carts', which were cartridges with less circuitry, and therefore cheaper. The Deck Enhancer is most famous for giving US gamers the chance to play Codemasters' infamous platformer *Dizzy*, a game which starred one of the world's only smiling eggs.



AS RARE AS: a good heart in these dark, cynical days.



SUPER MARIO BROS GAME & WATCH YM-901

NINTENDO (1987)
Then: £30 Now: £1000

Another game you would have had to prove your gaming prowess (and with a Japanese accent) to get hold of because YM-901 (as its known to its friends) was an exclusive gift to gamers of the East who took part in an *F1 Race* competition in 1987. The clincher is the presentation box shaped like a Famicom Disc mascot of yesteryear – the kind of incredibly beautiful one-of-a-kind package that's just aching to be fawned over by a bored QVC presenter who's visibly five items away from losing it live on national television.





AS RARE AS: managing to tear the foil lid off a Muller Fruit Corner in one piece.

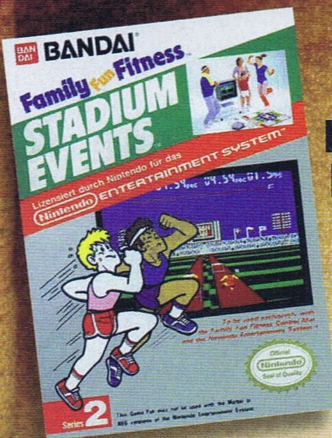



VIRTUAL BOWLING

ATHENA (1995)
Then: £40 Now: £600

Ignoring the prototype Virtual Boy games that Yamauchi's probably locked away in a safe, guarded by two laser-eyed demons from the lower stratas of hell, this is the most highly sought-after VB game, mostly on account of the roughly 3.5 copies it actually sold. It makes pretty good use of the system's 3D – it makes you think you're about to get smacked in the eye with a flying bowling ball, over and over again – but you could pay for 400 games at the Megabowl for this price. And get a plate of chips and a couple of goes on the Air Hockey.

AS RARE AS: finding out your dog's getting married – and the cat's his best man.



FAMILY FUN FITNESS STADIUM EVENTS

BANDAI (1987)
Then: £40 Now: £1000

One of the rarest NES games you'll ever (not) find, *Stadium Events* was on sale for just three months, and only in Woolworths. Three months is all it took for Nintendo to spot a money-making opportunity, steam in, buy the thing outright, and sell it as their own as *World Class Track Meet*. Only 2000 Bandai carts were manufactured, and it's compatible with the NES Power Pad, which lets you control the game by running on the spot. Perfect. After you've emptied your wallet for this, you can simply exercise the tears away.

AS RARE AS: the duff batch of caramel-less all-chocolate Rolos we once managed to find.





GAME BOY LIGHT

NINTENDO (1998)
Then: £34
Now: £hundreds

Got one of these, have you? Come back when your alarm clock's gone off. Just 1000 of these smaller, back-lit versions of the original Game Boy were made, and they were only on sale in Japan for a couple of months in April 1998. There's also an Astro Boy version, which has a transparent casing and the eponymous robot kid slapped on the top. Apparently, that one was only available during one summer, in one shop in Tokyo's electronics district, Akihabara. The shopkeeper's probably still beating himself in the crotch with a dinner plate for letting go of those.

AS RARE AS: beating *Ikaruga*.





STAR FOX SUPER WEEKEND

NINTENDO (1993)
Then: £free Now: £120

Yet another competition cart designed to get collectors pirouetting on the spot with want, *Star Fox Super Weekend* was a tweaked, shortened and timed version of the original SNES 3D blasterpiece. Handed out to contest winners in the spring of 1993 and sold by mail order for a short time afterwards, only 2000 were ever made. The 20 winners also bagged themselves a bomber jacket swarming with giant, gaudy Star Fox logos. Proof that rare doesn't always mean desirable.

AS RARE AS: A coffee grenade.

> **"COLLECTORS WOULD SELL THEIR OWN FACE TO GET THEIR HANDS ON ONE"**

NINTENDO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 1990

NINTENDO (1990)
Then: £free Now: £3500

Featuring timed sections from *Super Mario Bros*, *Rad Racer* and *Tetris*, this NES cart was used by sweating contestants in an official US Nintendo-playing tournament. Someone must have slipped a generosity pill into Nintendo's orange juice, because they gave away 90 of these competition carts to the finalists, and handed out a further 26 super-rare gold versions in a magazine contest. That's 116 in all – collectors would sell their own face to get their hands on one. *Their own face.*





AS RARE AS: the Loch Ness Monster sending You've Been Framed his video of a Yeti falling off a ski lift.



INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER 2000

KONAMI (2000)
Then: £40 Now: £20

Pssst. This is our tip for the future. No Nintendo 64 game really qualifies as rare yet (not even *Bangaio*, which is relatively common when compared to games as rare as the ones on show here). But *International Superstar Soccer 2000*, the last game in Konami's brilliant N64 footy series, is destined to rocket in price in the next few years. We mostly remember it for the RPG mode, which gave you around 130 screens of text before finally allowing you to put foot to ball, and had the main character, um, performing to a rude magazine. In the presence of his teammate. Very strange…

AS RARE AS: a terrorist plot that Jack Bauer reckons he needs twenty-*five* hours to foil.




TENGAI MAKYOU ZERO (Shounen Jump version)

HUDSON (1995)
Then: £free Now: £600

There's nothing too special storywise about this Japanese RPG – young boy's village under attack, grandfather killed, you know the sort of thing. But it's a stunner to look at, and like *Animal Crossing*, there's a clock in the cart that makes things happen at a certain time (such as your bank manager calling to ask why you've just sold the house to a Mr E Bay). But the really big deal is a unique (but identical) version that was given away by Japanese comic Weekly Shounen Jump. Only 100 of these special editions exist.

AS RARE AS: lightning striking twice. On your under-barbecued chicken wing, handily.



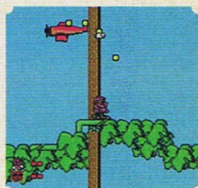
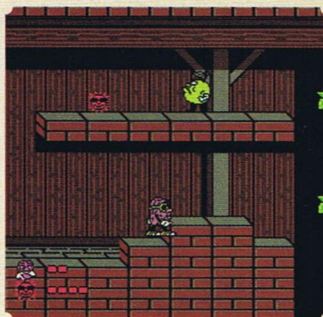
POCKETSIZE GAME & WATCH

NINTENDO (1980s)
Then: £20
Now: £1000

There are plenty of rare Game & Watches, but Pocketsize G&Ws were released exclusively in the USA and Canada, and are highly prized for their unique and rather nifty artwork (the *Donkey Kong II* box is your only chance to see Mario looking like a pregnant, Italian Des Lynam). *Snoopy Tennis* nearly broke eBay recently when it came up for auction – bidding ending at a whopping $930 (£551) and it's expected that the magic $1000 barrier will be smashed apart by frenzied collectors in the near future. All for a cardboard box, basically.

AS RARE AS: the Holy Grail turning up on page 312 of the Argos catalogue.



CALIFORNIA RAISINS THE GRAPE ESCAPE

CAPCOM (UNRELEASED)
Then: £free Now: £600

Just one copy of this juice-packed NES cart exists. No need to pour water into your eyes, it really does star a band of wrinkled old grapes, harking as it does to a time in the late '80s when California Raisins' dancing and singing ad mascots were the best thing on telly. It really is one of the most tediously uninspiring platformers ever to grace the NES, so spend your money on a packet of real raisins instead. Not ones with eyes, though – that would be horrible.

AS RARE AS: Elvis Presley and Pope John Paul being sighted together in a Droitwich Burger King.



EARTHBOUND (English)

NINTENDO (UNRELEASED)
Then: £n/a Now: £400+

A massive NES hit in Japan, *Earthbound* (known as *Mother* to the Japanese) was fully translated and ready to go with the packaging finished. But it was then pulled, allegedly over fears that no one in the US liked RPGs. This finished cart – an evaluation copy sent to Nintendo of Canada in September 1990 – managed to escape from Nintendo, and is currently in the hands of one very lucky collector. If he doesn't have it in some kind of glass cabinet that rises up from the floor when he presses a button, there really is no justice.

AS RARE AS: a meteorite crashing into your garden and opening up to reveal a winning lottery ticket.



NINTENDO SCT

NINTENDO (UNKNOWN)
Then: £unknown
Now: £hundreds

Looking like a console Nintendo might have released in the '40s, the SCT is apparently a giant device that Nintendo used to test or store the code from their own cartridges. It stomped onto eBay in December 1993. It was snapped up, and obviously made an unusual Christmas present for one lucky girlfriend. We failed to get in touch with the owner for further details, but all we really care about is finding out what that big green button does.

AS RARE AS: the phone ringing just *before* you get in the shower.




16 PACKED PAGES OF DS & GBA!

NGC POCKET

FOR HANDHELD GAMERS

IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...



NANOSTRAY

Warm up your guns for this delicious slice of old-school shooting. **P.44**



FEEL THE MAGIC 2

A hot date is only a stroke away. **P.40**



PAC 'N' ROLL

Pac-Man rolls his way onto the DS for the second time this year... **P.46**






PLUS!

- *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, *Snowboard Kids DS* and *Bleach DS* previewed!
- *Premier Manager '06* and *Pac-Man World 2* reviewed!
- Pictoart gallery! The best scribbles of the month.

N·GC POCKET

NEWS • NEWS • NEWS • NEWS

WELCOME TO NGC POCKET...

August may not exactly be a festival of new game releases, but the DS is swiftly becoming a force of nature that doesn't care for such gaming conventions. As well as outselling the PS2 in Japan by a ratio of two to one, the handheld monster just keeps growing more and more limbs as more and more games clamber to get a piece of the touchy-feely pie (and, by the way, *Jump! Superstars* managed to sell an astonishing 320,000 copies on its first day on sale in Japan alone).

And if a star-studded anime beat-'em-up orgy isn't exactly your thing, there's always the very good *Pac 'n' Roll* (reviewed on page 46) to keep that stylus of yours twitching. And despite 2005 shaping up to be the year of DS, this month's Pocket News is still rich in vitamins G, B and A, as there are more and more games piling up *and* the GBA Micro is all set for release.

As well as all this, Atari's *Driver 3* is to have a stab at handheld GTA-style driving and shooting, while another ambitious genre-blend – Namco's *Sigma Star Saga* – keeps giving GBA owners reason to keep those rechargers handy.

Not to mention *Digitylish*, a dazzlingly cool collection of minigames with more funk than a cigar-chugging jazz musician who's not washed for a month. And that is pretty damn funky.

There's never been a better time to have pockets...

Geraint Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Issue 10, October 2005
Editor: The Little Welshy
Contributors: Mr Surfer Man, Hello Kittsy, The Blue Flash, The Norwich Hobbit



POKEMON OVERDOSE!

Three new Poké-titles on the way...





△ **The aptly-named *Pokémon Puzzle*.**

Whatever you may think of Nintendo's uber-successful Pokémon franchise, it's clear what Nintendo itself reckons: there still aren't enough Poké-fans in the world. We need more, dammit! And so after Pokémons *Diamond*, *Pearl* and *Gale of Darkness*, there are another trio of games based on the monster-breeding favourite scheduled for release on the DS.

First up is *Pokémon Puzzle*. The title hardly makes it sound mysterious, but imagine something pretty similar to the excellent *Zoo Keeper*, but with the animals replaced by Pokémon (lots, and lots of Pokémon...) and you get the idea.

Next up is *Mysterious Dungeon Blue*, which will be released at the same time as *Mysterious Dungeon Red* on the GBA, but unfortunately no details are available on this at the moment.

Finally, there's *Pokémon Ranger*, another game that little is known about, aside from the fact that it will have some kind of interaction with *Diamond* and *Pearl*, and may be tied in to the forthcoming Poké-movie.

Which, in all, brings the total of Pokémon games on DS up to five. The machine's not yet one year old, making Nintendo a true pocket monster. Start rubbing your hands with glee, or building a Poké-proof bomb shelter.

SIGMA STAR SAGA

Shooting for the stars on GBA.

The GBA is the last place you'd look for ambitious game development, but Namco's determined to exploit the handheld as much as possible with its RPG/shoot-'em-up crossover *Sigma Star Saga*.

It marries the two genres by providing a hefty story and strong characters that form the backdrop for an intricate, side-scrolling shooter. There are some 15,000 possible weapon combinations for you to wield, and they sound like something out of *Gradius*'s greatest hits. Here's a sample arsenal: Triple Shot, Bubble, Boomerang, Steer Shot, Ignite and Super Vampire. It's out now in the US, with a UK release sure to follow soon afterwards.





△ **There are an astonishing amount of weapons at your disposal.**



DRIVER 3



The GBA does good cop/bad cop.

Or, *Driv3r* to give it its proper, and rather rubbish, name. Just how the hell are you supposed to pronounce that? That's not a proper name. But don't worry about it – there's been enough *Driver 3* (we refuse to call it *Driv3r*) angst in the world as it is, because the PS2 and Xbox versions of it were just plain awful. And now there's a chance for the ambitious undercover driving game to redeem itself on the GBA.

As you can see from the shots, it's all in 3D and surprisingly detailed, but the framerate will prove to be its making or undoing – especially since whizzing through city streets is what it's mostly about.

Some 50 kilometers of roads are present, spread across the two international cities of Nice and Miami. The sprawling 25 missions see the grizzled copper Tanner penetrating the criminal underworld and unravelling it from the inside out. But it's not all wheels, wheels, wheels – aside from the 25 vehicles available, Tanner can leave his car and trot about the world with gun in hand, GTA-style, and search for secret missions, and probably some criminals to shoot.



△ **Despite the home console versions being rubbish, this could be pretty decent.**

PALMTOP PUNCH-UP

Smash Bros on its way to DS?

Of course it is. Nintendo not releasing a DS instalment of Smash Bros would be like the winner of X Factor not releasing a mercilessly cynical follow-up single. Miyamoto himself has finally hinted at the fact in a recent interview, but in typically teasing Shigsy style, he didn't confirm anything, just saying that Smash Bros is a highly likely prospect for our favourite handheld.

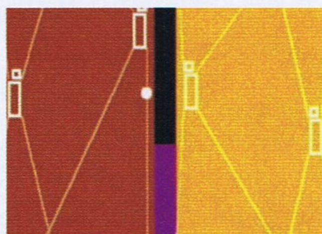
We all know it's going to happen, and we hope it will be as amazing as the Gamecube version. We don't see why not, provided they include four-player WiFi modes and lots of manic special powers. Oh, and Pikmin. We think it's about time the creepy veg joined in with the ruckus.

DIGITYLISH

The GBA gets its funk on.

Whaty-what-lish? *Digitylish* – which seems to be an amalgam of the words digital and stylish – is a collection of vivid, abstract and super-cool minigames that is due for release on the GBA. A far cry from Atari's stinky *Retro Classics* compilation for DS, *Digitylish* has a look that's both crisp, fresh and surprisingly retro. It's made up of bold colours and clean shapes that look simple without looking old before their time.

One game involves guiding a group of lines through a tunnel – we're not too sure what's going on, but it looks very pretty for a GBA game. Another seems to be a distant relative of *Pong*, as pairs of stick figures whose limbs are tethered to the extremes of the screen dart around, bouncing back at each other. We're expecting this one to touch down around about the same time as the Game Boy Micro. It could be the perfect launch game.



△ ***Digitylish* certainly looks different to the rest of the games out there.**

POLARIUM 2

More brain-scarring puzzling.

It's unlikely you've come anywhere close to finishing the original, but there's an avalanche of new one-line conundrums for you to tackle in the upcoming sequel. Well, it's not a proper sequel, more of an expansion pack, featuring some 365 stages and the introduction of colour into its previously stark, monochrome appearance. We reckon that a slightly more colourful approach will do the puzzler the power of good.

It's being released in Japan at a budget price on 13th October, and it shouldn't take long to reach these shores – it's not exactly a nightmare to translate, is it? A GBA version of the original *Polarium* is touching down at the same time, too.

NEWS WIRES

MANA MANIA



No other game in Square Enix's Mana series has managed to match the magic, wonder and all-round loveliness of *Secret of Mana* on SNES. We've had versions on GBA, PSone and PS2, but none have hit the spot.

Square Enix's next attempt to recapture that charm is *World of Mana*, an RPG that's been confirmed for 'multiple formats', and chances are it will reach one of Nintendo's handhelds, especially after the success of *Kingdom Hearts*. No details of the game are available, but a trailer has been released featuring some suitably delicate music and a teasing shot of the massive Mana tree itself. If you don't like the thought of us getting excited, then look away now.

BLIZZ KID

Blizzard has been busy producing quality videogames for many years, but is yet to go near a piece of Nintendo hardware. But now, as well as being hard at work with *Starcraft: Ghost* for Gamecube, the renowned studio has hinted that it'll be getting into the swing of things with the DS.

Blizzard recently asked its fans whether or not they'd like to see a version of the excellent dungeon-based action-RPG Diablo and space-based RTS Starcraft – both huge successes on PC – appear on the DS. Silly question, eh? But, just in case Blizzard is in any doubt, maybe if we all shout loud enough, they'll hear us. Altogether now, on three…

PANIC ATTACK

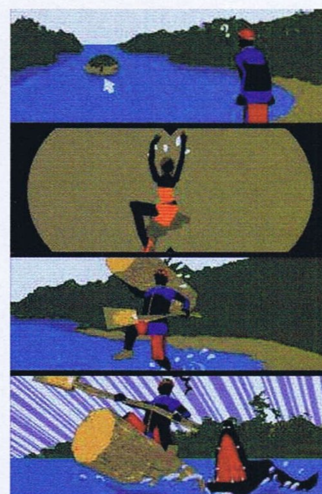
Due for release in Japan this December is *Touch Panic* for DS. Any game with the word panic in the title is one to be avoided by those with heart conditions or brittle bones, but this next jolt of puzzle-based madness from Nintendo sounds to be the perfect cure for serenity.

Touch Panic involves sliding panels into place to make a track for a Panic ball – a relentless, rolling ball that has to get from one end of each course to the other. Some 50 special moves will be included – although we have no idea of what they'll be – plus you can double-tap the ball itself to make it dash forward, if you're some kind of thrill junkie. We're not sure when *Touch Panic* will be messing with the pulse rates of Euro DS owners, but we expect it will arrive sometime during early 2006.





△ The definition of love at first sight.



△ It's like *Resi 4's* lake-based boss fight, but a lot cuter.

FEEL THE MAGIC XX/XY 2

From: SONIC TEAM
Out: OCTOBER (JPN), TBC (UK/US)

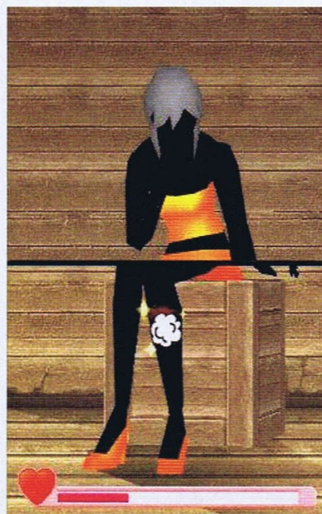




Or, *Where Do Babies Come From?* as the Japanese title would have it. Not that this is anything close to a biology lesson. Like the original, this is a game dedicated to the messiest of all human endeavours: love. Or rather more specifically, the lengths a boy will go to in order to impress the girl of his dreams. There are no saggy bunches of flowers, sweaty palms or nervous compliments here, though – this is courtship, Sega-style. It may as well be called Need For Speed Dating, as the procession of manic minigames are steeped as much in funky style as they are in funky stylus use.

This sequel looks like it will be a suitable mix of intimacy and lunacy. One particularly odd minigame sees you frantically paddling a log out to a small island to rescue a stranded lady, all the while being chased by a crocodile. You then sort out her wounds in a supremely gentle fashion.

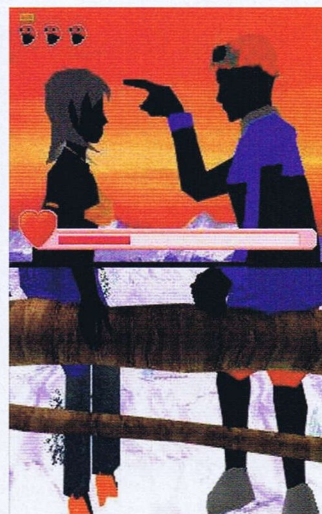
We're also anxious to know whether we will see a return of the original's creepy Maniac mode, where we got to clothe, ogle and harass the girl of our dreams in a manner more befitting a serial killer than an affectionate beau. We're afraid to admit that we hope so.



△ Whatever is up with her leg, it's nothing a stylus won't fix.



△ This minigame requires you to heal the object of your affection's wounds. It's quite literally a very touching scene… Never mind the magic, feel the pun.



△ The unique silhouette visuals from the first game make a welcome return.



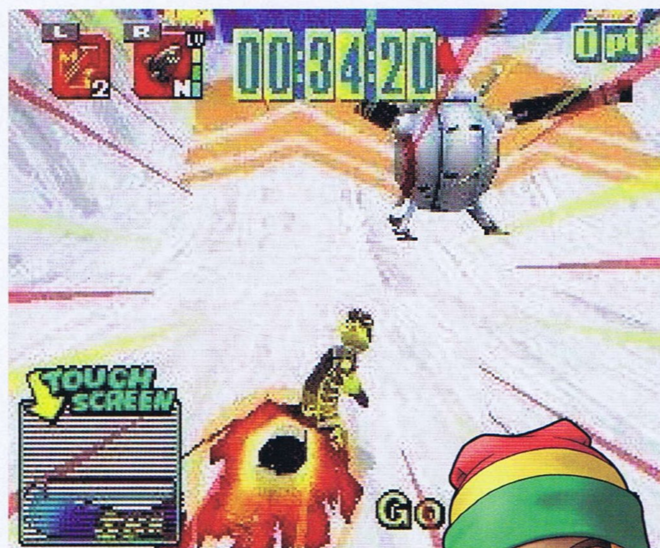
SBK SNOWBOARD KIDS DS

From: ATLUS **Out:** NOVEMBER

However much you loved four-player *GoldenEye* on N64, there must have been days when you overdosed on its excellent deathmatch mode – which is where *Snowboard Kids 64* came in. Its rickety single-player experience didn't matter, not when its split-screen multiplayer was so simple, sweet and satisfying. It was kind of like *Mario Kart*, but steeper.

Which is pretty much the main reason we're excited about *Snowboard Kids DS*. Forget all the extreme tricks and other showy stuff; *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland* will have that all wrapped up when its released. No, four-player WiFi racing is likely to be where it's at. Choose a character from the eight irritating children on offer (and irritating your mates is seven-tenths of the fun in multiplayer games), carve your way down a devilishly kinked slope and use colourful power-ups to annoy the hell out of everyone else.

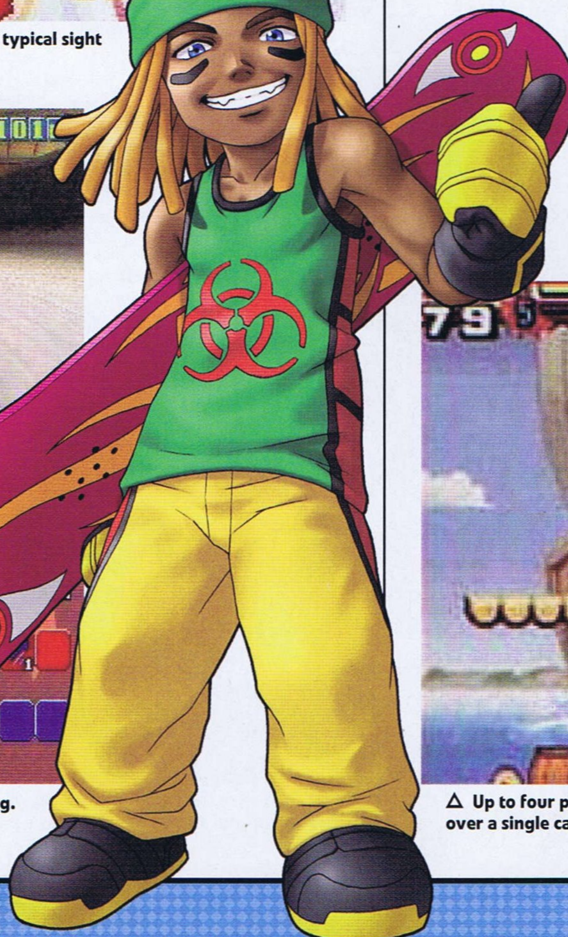
Stylus control and 'awesome special tricks' will feature, but that's not what it's about. This, alongside *Mario Kart*, looks like it's going to be the best multiplayer game on the DS.



△ **Speed lines and steep ramps are a typical sight in *Snowboard Kids DS*.**



△ **Ooof. That looks suitably infuriating. Exactly how we like it.**





△ **There's no need for that much shouting, surely?**



△ **The fighting looks suitably manic and very pretty indeed.**

JUMP! SUPERSTARS

From: GANBARION **Out:** NOW (JPN), TBC (US/UK)

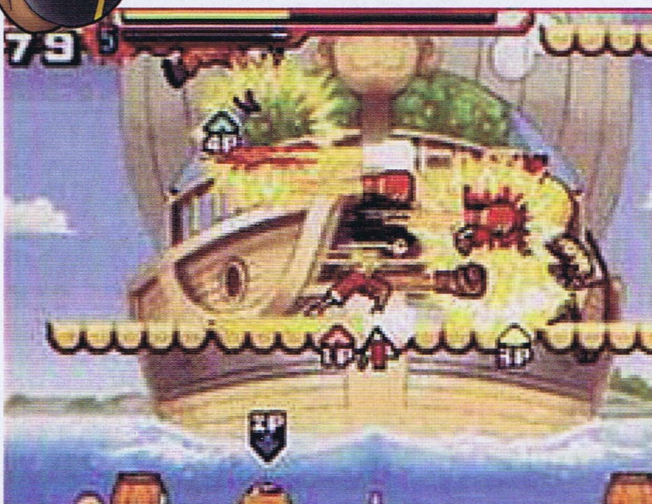
By the time this magazine hits the shelves, *Jump! Superstars* will have been released in Japan and it will almost certainly be superglued right at the top of the sales charts. Nintendo's Anime-mad 2D beat-'em-up has received over 400,000 pre-orders before its release in the first week of August. So what's all the fuss about? It's just a rather pretty-looking arena-based battler along the lines of *Super Smash Bros*, isn't it?

The reason this game is going to be absolutely huge is that the game's licence comes from Jump! magazine, the home of such anime heavyweights as Dragon Ball, Naruto and One Piece, among others. If you still don't understand why it's going to be so popular, imagine Nintendo releasing a beat-'em-up starring characters from Eastenders, Coronation Street, The Bill and Big Brother, and you'll be pretty close.

This is looking like it's going to be Japan's biggest DS game yet. Unfortunately for us, however, it looks like that's exactly where *Jump! Superstars* is going to stay for the time being. Still, there's always the possibility of importing…



△ **Comic strips on the bottom screen, comic scraps on the top.**



△ **Up to four players can WiFight simultaneously. As well as this, it's possible over a single cart link, so only one of you will have to buy the game.**

BLEACH DS

From: TREASURE **Out: JANUARY**

The Japanese studio Treasure has always been a bit of a wild one; we never know what to expect from them as the quality of their games veers from the sublime to the ridiculous. They created the genius of *Astro Boy: Omega Factor*, the goodness of *Wario World* and the shoddiness of *Advance Guardian Heroes*. Still, we will happily play such a game of roulette because the 2D beat-'em-up *Bleach* may well turn out to be absolutely incredible.

It's based on the popular Japanese anime of the same name, and will allow four-player battles via WiFi (and via single cart link, if you're scrapping with nearby players). The fights themselves will take place on both the background and foreground, and players can hop between the two.

This innovative feature adds depth to the environment, while managing to retain the complex combos of a 2D fighter. No other details are available at the time of going to press, but those who have been around videogames for some time may remember Treasure's original *Guardian Heroes* – a similar game to *Bleach* – that rocked the Sega Saturn several years ago. Let's hope Treasure haven't lost that particular knack…



△ Ganju doesn't look impressed with Renji's balloon animal.



△ This is much more than just a traditional one-on-one fighter.



△ Three against one? Isn't that officially classed as bullying?





△ Pin-sharp fighters with, erm, sword-sharp swords. Nice.

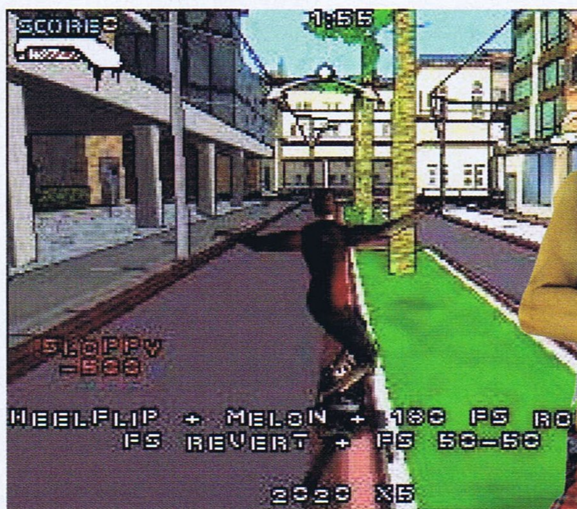
TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND DS

From: VICARIOUS VISIONS **Out: OCTOBER**

Conversion kings Vicarious Visions are specialists in bringing Tony Hawk games to Nintendo handhelds. Remember *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* for the GBA? It was a neat shoehorning of the console game, and one that makes us excited about the franchise's upcoming DS debut. Well, as excited as it's possible to be about another Tony Hawk game. It's not like there aren't already loads of them.

It features a particularly pretty form of cel-shading. As well as the bright colours and thick, black lines that make up such a look, seeing the game in motion is quite a surprise. It moves in a super-smooth fashion and the graphics shift and wobble slightly like some kind of living sketch. It's a seemingly deliberate style choice that smooths over the finer details of the environment and allows it to move without framerate issues.

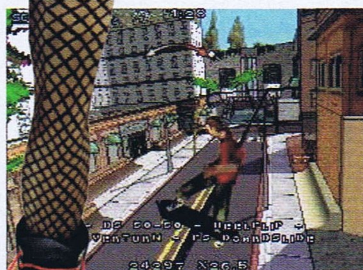
You will be using the buttons to pull off tricks in the traditional Tony Hawk style, but the touch-screen will come in useful for activating special moves and designing your own logos. As well as this, you can record a handful of voice samples for your character to blurt when you land a special move or crack your jaw on the floor.



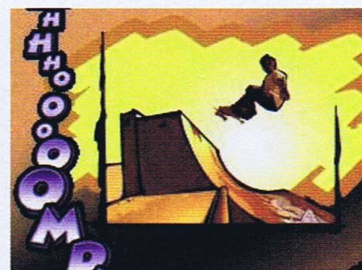
△ The game is more fluid than *Super Mario 64 DS*.



△ The beautiful cel-shading sets *THAW* apart from other Tony Hawk games.



△ Got a wireless router? Then you can go online with *THAW*.



△ Hoooomp? What was wrong with good old fashioned Neeeeeowww?





△ You are charged with making sure that your customers are satisfied. A couple of vending machines ought to keep the kids quiet.

ZOO TYCOON DS

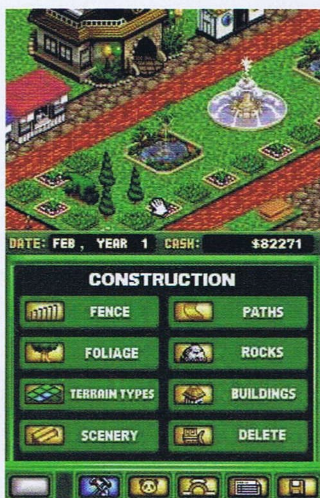
From: BLUE FANG **Out:** SEPTEMBER

If you're bored of shepherding Pokémon and hustling Pikmin, it may be time you got your hands on some real animals for a change. And no, we're not talking about the machine-washable pooches of *Nintendogs*. Now is your chance to rear, feed and maintain the kind of animals you only ever get to see behind bars or being whispered about by David Attenborough.

Based on the successful PC franchise, this is a wildlife park sim that puts you in charge of building and designing a zoo, choosing the animals and making sure they're happy. When that's done, you have to make sure your visitors are satisfied, or your cash flow will trickle away to nothing. Giraffes, monkeys, polar bears, lions, tigers and every plop they produce is your problem. Only animal lovers and keen strategists need apply, or else the virtual RSPCA will have to get involved.

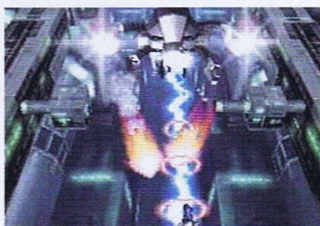


△ Just like a real zoo tycoon, you have to take care of the riff-'raffe.



△ Plonking a couple of fountains in will keep the adult customers happy.



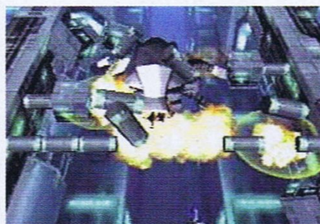

△ Some enemies can only be destroyed with your secondary weapon.

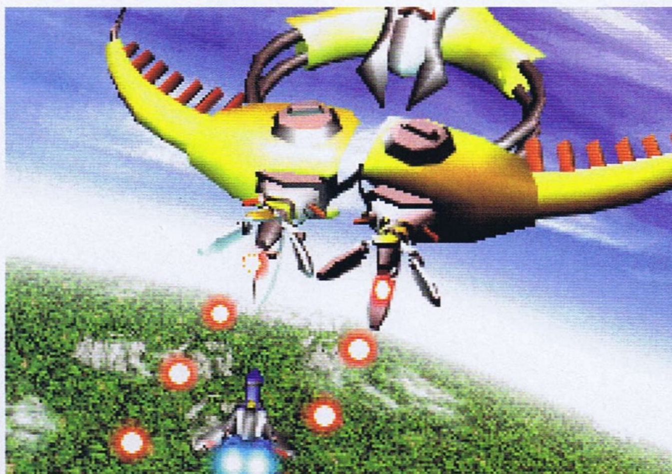

△ Using your primary weapon gives you valuable score multipliers.


△ There's no denying that Shin'en have done a fine job with the visuals.


△ The only time the game really slows down is during the meatier explosions.


△ Initially it can seem confusing as you're swamped by enemy fire.


△ The final levels don't pose much of a challenge. You'll beat it in a day.


△ Your shields will take quite a few hits before you're finally destroyed.


△ The enemies in later levels are smaller, with more erratic attack patterns.


△ Smart bombs will clear the screen.


△ Use the R button to attract coins.



NANOSTRAY



FROM: MAJESCO
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW (US) TBC (UK)
SINGLE CART LINK: YES
COST: $30 (£17)

A shooter the DS can be proud of…

German developers Shin'en have really outdone themselves this time. They've already had a couple of attempts at handheld shooters with both *Iridion* and *Iridion 2* – both of which excelled visually (especially when it came to milking the GBA's 3D capabilities) but the gameplay of both games left a lot to be desired. And now Shin'en are back on DS, and again, presentation and high quality 3D visuals are at the forefront. In fact, it's hard to think of a DS game that shines so brightly.

The 3D backgrounds are gorgeous, with loads of different environments speeding under your ship at a rate of knots. Enemies, bullets and special effects litter the screen to the point of intimidation, but the framerate only drops during the biggest explosions, which is when you actually *want* it to slow down. It's all terribly impressive stuff – it looks solid, robust and makes you feel genuinely exhilarated – a fantastic showcase for what the DS is capable of.

Thankfully, it also plays remarkably well and there are no *Ikaruga*-style gimmicks, which have been a staple of Japanese shooters for the last few years – and in some


△ Many of the 3D environments are used as obstacles to negotiate.


△ Some of the end of level bosses are very impressive – and tricky to beat.







△ The bottom screen is used as a radar and as a means of selecting weapons on the fly. This is distracting and often fatal.



△ Sticking to one weapon is a safe bet as changing them is risky.



△ The amount of things on-screen can seem daunting at first.



△ The artwork on the backdrops is lovely and well-implemented.



△ The perspective is such that you don't always know which areas of the screen are 'safe' to fly though – particularly when it comes to some of the bosses.



△ This is your standard laser. Each weapon has its own, more powerful secondary function – useful for specific tasks or enemy formations. Choose wisely.



△ If you collect energy tokens when your meter is full, your score multiplies.



△ Challenge mode gives the game's lifespan a massive boost.

ways this makes it perfect handheld fodder. However, underneath what seems like a straightforward blaster hides a quite complex scoring system, requiring you to not only take down enemy ships, but focus on clearing complete waves for bonus coins, while avoiding using your more powerful weaponry in order to earn score multipliers.

The main adventure is a bit easy, we completed it in just one afternoon, but the meat of the game can be found in replaying levels for better scores and rankings in Arcade mode, as well as hammering through the super-tough and exhaustive Challenge modes. These require you to replay levels with specific objectives, like hitting a score cap or finishing the level with a minimum of lives – the completion of which is intensely rewarding.

On the whole, it's enjoyable stuff, but there are a couple of niggles that prevent it from being perfect. First and foremost, the points system. While reasonable enough, it's a little on the fussy side – forcing you to ignore the best weapons in favour of a better score. Also, the touch-screen weapon selection can be problematic as you're required to take your attention away from the action to switch between firing modes. These are two issues that are bound to irritate any hardcore shooter fanatics.

Lastly, the perspective and use of 3D obstacles can make judging which parts of the screen are safe to negotiate and which are harmful pretty difficult at times. Unfortunately, this is something that can only really be remedied through memorising attack patterns and ship movements. Still, like we said, this is a very good effort that's well worth adding to your collection.

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★★
TOUCH ★★★



RED HOT POKER

Bundled with our Japanese copy of Pac 'n' Roll was this rather chunky Pac-Man stylus, a tool that feels more like a crayon than a paint brush. But it's absolutely ideal for the game – you'll need to make lots of wide, sweeping strokes to the borders of the screen to control Pac-Man, meaning that this fat wand works really well. Fantastic stuff.



■ Namco's freebie Pac-Man stylus. Essential. Unless you've already got a knitting needle.



■ Just for scale, here's Link awkwardly brandishing it after killing Geraint.





△ There are dozens of gems for you to collect, and they're hidden throughout the game.



△ There are some brilliantly designed levels.

PAC 'N' ROLL



FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW (JAP) TBC (UK) **COST:** £30

The DS's best roll-playing game is here.



Pac-Man's been around for ages, but now he's going around like never before. Balls to complicated action heroes with legs and arms – Pac-Man manages with nothing but his pokey little nose and a permanent grin on his face.

Pac 'n' Roll is actually quite similar to *Super Monkey Ball*. It's less subtle, but just as exhausting as you roll Pac-Man by rubbing the stylus over him on the lower screen, like a track-ball. A dash move is activated by swiping at him with the stylus and letting your stroke reach the edge of the screen – an essential move for dodging ghosts, smashing crates and tackling slopes.

This time there are loads of power-ups available. For example, an armour pick-up gives Pac-Man a helmet. It slows his movement, but enables him to smash metal boxes and sink to the bottom of waterlogged areas. There's also the feather pick-up, which gives him a winged cap, making him able to glide through the air and skim across water at speed. Unfortunately, there's no bandana to turn him into 2Pac.

> "THERE'S A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SKY THAT'S STRAIGHT OUT OF MARIO'S RAINBOW ROAD"

The stages are a mixture of undulating racecourses and platforming sections; although the former are far more enjoyable than the latter. Whipping Pac around the banks and slopes with the stylus is simple, satisfying fun. Performing jumps and dodging timed hazards are less enjoyable, but overall it's an agreeable mix.

As well as this, later levels include sections reminiscent of the ghost-filled mazes of the original Pac-Man. While that may sound lazy, they're actually plenty of fun, simply because the analogue controls are incredibly well executed and fun to use.

Some levels are absolutely glorious and very few are laborious. There's a lovely journey through the sky that's straight out of Mario's Rainbow Road, for example. Although it's slightly marred by a previous stage where you have to continually jump off the back of a moving platform to collect pills – Pac-Man's traditional currency.

Initially, all the levels are about collecting enough pills. And it's possible to burn through the 30-odd stages in an afternoon. But don't frown, time trial versions of each stage are also available, and there's a



△ If a ghost attacks you, you have to stab them away on the lower screen.





△ There's no escaping it. The original Pac-Man is here for you to unlock.



△ Pac-Man's power pills are still here. Collect one and you can gobble up enemies.

further Challenge mode for each level. Although they're so tough you may as well put your finger in a vice, just to get into character for such a masochist pursuit.

Pac 'n' Roll is heavy on the wrists, too. But when a game is this physical, that's the price you have to pay. Anyway, hands up those who gave themselves finger failure and broken palms on *Donkey Konga*'s bongos? What's that? You *can't* raise your hands? Ho ho.

We're mystified by the lack of a multiplayer mode, though. Especially since it seems to fit the format so well. Although the fact that the original *Pac-Man* is unlockable within the main game goes some way to make up for this. But why is there no version of Gamecube's awesome *Pac-Man Vs*?

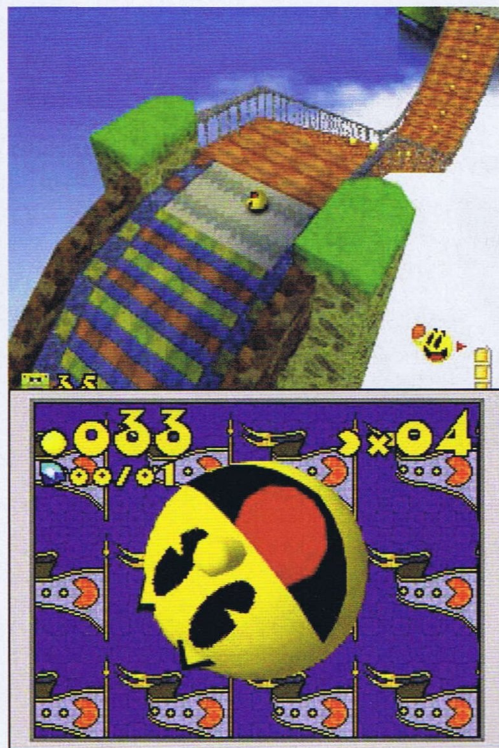
But although it is slightly flawed, *Pac 'n' Roll* is a really good, fun game. And with *Pac-Pix* already putting a smile on our faces, it seems that Pac-Man is turning out to be one of DS's biggest stars. Unbelievable.

STEVEN BAILEY

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★★★☆
4



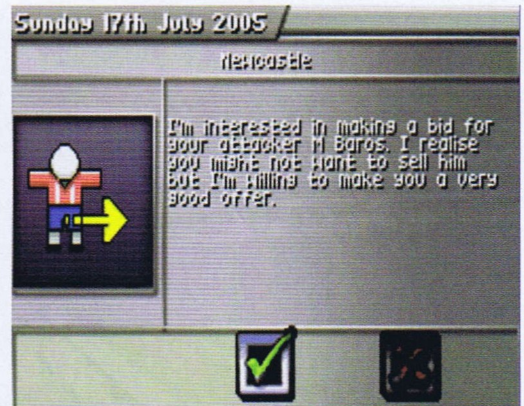
△ Usefully, you can control the camera with both the D-pad and the face buttons. Nice one.



△ The opening stages are fast, loose and easy (much like Paul), and help to get you into the swing of things.

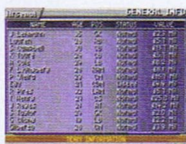


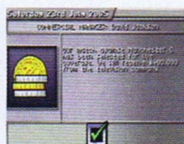
△ The matches play out in a jumble of icons. How do you know who's playing well? You don't.



△ The game takes an absolute age to really get going.







△ There are plenty of stat screens to check out.





△ Every aspect of your club can be managed.

△ The menu screen. Doesn't it just make you want to manage?



△ A more comprehensive in-match commentary would have been ideal.



△ The chairman conversations are pretty tedious, truth be told.

PREMIER MANAGER 05-06

FROM: ZOO DIGITAL **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25

Football condensed into a cartridge with all the charisma of a calculator.



Much like last year's instalment, this is actually fairly enjoyable for a handheld management sim. It's not the most exhaustive in terms of authenticity or complexity, but it still manages to perform pretty admirably.

Our first impressions weren't great though. The quality of the presentation is rudimentary at best, and the endless reams of menus, lists and stats prove impenetrable at first. It also takes forever to actually get going as the game starts you off in July, so you have an entire month of looking at grey screens, transfer conversations and loading times before you see any action or feel the rewards of your tinkering. As a result, you're going to have to stick with it before it begins to reveal its charms.

The content itself isn't bad at all. There are five countries to choose from: England, Italy, France, Germany and Spain. Each country has two leagues and all the teams and players (barring some more recent transfers) are all present and correct.

You also have control over pretty much every aspect of the club, like buying and selling players, employing new staff and buying new stadiums. There are tons of stats to bury your head in, if you like that kind of thing, and there's both sufficient depth and plenty to get involved in.

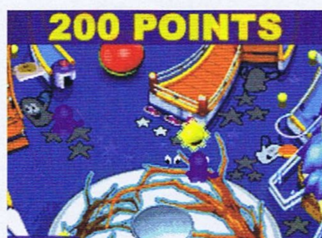
> **"THIS IS ACTUALLY FAIRLY ENJOYABLE FOR A HANDHELD MANAGEMENT SIM"**

Our main issue with it, however, is that during a game it's not immediately apparent during a match which of your players are performing well. So judging how to adjust your tactics is relatively difficult. Sure, after the match you can check out various statistics and breakdowns to get a handle on how your team is performing, but it's not quite as intuitive as we would have liked.

Also, much like last year's Premier Manager, some of the match results can seem a little wayward and unrealistic, although on the whole the game is rarely unfair and diligence in the way you run your club does reap its own rewards. It's a good effort then. Not perfect, but definitely satisfactory.

GERAINT EVANS







△ Despite the distinctly different looks of each table, they all play too similarly.



PAC-MAN PINBALL

FROM: ZOO DIGITAL **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25



Pac-Man Pinball isn't actually such a bad effort – the physics aren't appalling (which is usually our first gripe with any pinball game) and you can deftly flip the ball (or rather Pac-Man) and aim with at least some confidence.



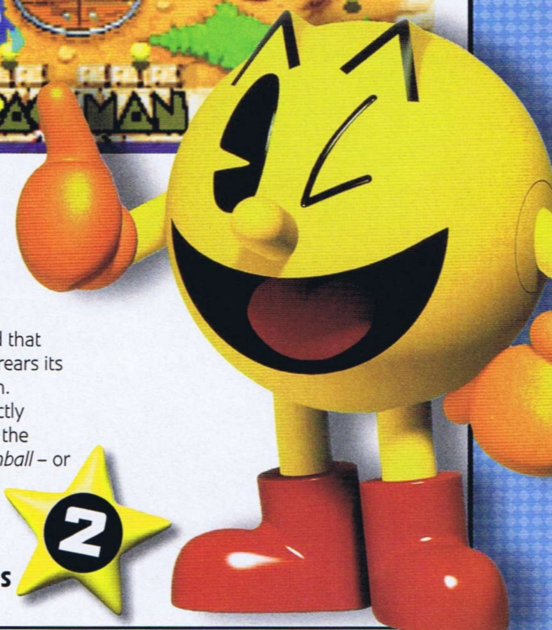
△ After extended play, you'll soon tire of the lack of depth in each stage.

At first it would appear that it has a lot to offer. There are four tables which are available from the off. Each one is two screens high with its own distinct theme, and the clarity and chunkiness of the presentation makes the process of wanging your ball around the tables easy to follow.

However, there are some problems. It may not seem like it at first, but *Pac-Man Pinball* is ultimately pretty shallow. Yes, there are four tables to choose from, but in all honesty, they're not significantly different from each other. If you stick with one table and master it, there is some enjoyment to be had. But moving on to the next provides little in the way of new features to explore, and that feeling of déjà vu inevitably rears its ugly head and ruins your fun.

As a quick blast, it's perfectly enjoyable, but compare it to the feature-packed *Pokémon Pinball* – or even the poor-but-pretty *Mario Pinball* – and there's very little to hold your interest.

GERAINT EVANS



2









△ After the relatively enjoyable original, this feels like a step backwards.

PAC-MAN WORLD 2

FROM: ZOO DIGITAL **SAVE:** PASSWORD **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25



It may come as a surprise, but we enjoyed the first *Pac-Man World*. It wasn't the most original game, but it was a competent platformer. Exciting probably isn't the best word to describe it, but it put a smile on our face. It was colourful, insanely cheerful (you had to love that inane music) and was generally, well, okay.

Cue *Pac-Man World 2*, and the developers have decided to ditch the pseudo-3D visuals of its predecessor in favour of some rubbishy sprite-based business, which makes it distinctly less appealing in one fell swoop. It's not the be all and end all, but when we're being asked to bounce through another platformer, collecting magic fruit to save a bunch of yellow beach balls, we want it to look fairly decent. This doesn't.

And it doesn't get any better. Your goal is to get to the end of the level, and you collect stuff, dispatch enemies and use Pac-Man's meagre skill-set to navigate obstacles like (wait for it) slopes, steps and platforms. This isn't bad in itself, but it becomes intensely dull when you're required to go to-and-fro across a level any number of times to hit switches and collect fruit. It's like some cruel form of torture. In a nutshell then? 'No'.

GERAINT EVANS





△ *Pac-Man World 2* is a masterclass in how to make a game genuinely tedious to play.

NGC POCKET

TIPS • TIPS • TIPS

All the latest and greatest DS and GBA cheats, tips and secrets...

TIP OF THE MONTH

GOLDENEYE ROGUE AGENT

There are plenty of new modes to unlock here, but it's the multiplayer skins that have got us dribbling into our Vodka Martinis. Bagsy Oddjob.

UNLOCKABLE EYE POWERS

EM HACK
Complete Virtual Training Mission 1.

MAGNETIC FIELD
Complete Virtual Training Mission 5.

MRI VISION
Complete Mission 1.

POLARITY SHIELD
Complete Virtual Training Mission 3.

UNLOCKABLE MULTIPLAYER LEVELS

BATH HOUSE
Complete Hong Kong on Hard mode.

BORE TUNNEL
Complete Mission 1 on Hard mode.

CARVER'S PRESS
Complete Virtual Training 6.

FUNHOUSE
Complete Virtual Training 1.

MINING PIT
Get all the Rogue Bonuses on one Campaign File.

GOLDENEYE MODE
Complete Virtual Training 6 on Normal mode.

MRI VISION ONLY MODE
Complete Mission 1 on Normal mode.

UNLOCKABLE SKINS

Unlock these for use in multiplayer…

AURIC GOLDFINGER SKIN
Complete Mission 2 on Hard mode.

DR NO SKIN
Complete Mission 5 on Hard mode.

FRANCISCO SCARAMANGA SKIN
Complete Virtual Training 1 on Normal mode.

GOLDENEYE SKIN
Complete the game on Easy mode.

ODDJOB SKIN
Complete Mission 1 on the Hard Campaign.

PUSSY GALORE SKIN
Complete Virtual Training Mission 4 on Normal mode.

XENIA ONATOPP SKIN
Complete Mission 4 on Normal mode.

UNLOCKABLE WEAPONS

GOBLIN MINE
Beat Hong Kong on Hard mode.

GOLDEN GUN
Complete Virtual Training Mission 1 on Hard mode.



MK2 DETONATOR
Complete Virtual Training Mission 2 on Hard mode

OMEN XR
Complete Mission 6 on Hard mode.

VENOM 200ML
Beat Auric Enterprises on Normal mode.



△ At last – *Meteos* is finally out on 23rd September. It slipped after we had reviewed it in issue 108. It's great by the way – five out of five. Buy it now!

METEOS



Unlock Weapons
If you collect blocks of a certain type, you can fuse them together to make weapons.

Driller Bomb
150 Air, 200 Fire.

Heavy Weight
256 Soil, 512 Iron, 512 Herb.

Row Bomb
111 Fire, 111 H20, 111 Soil.

Smart Bomb
300 Air, 300 Fire, 300 H20, 300 Soil, 300 Iron, 300 Zap, 300 Herb, 300 Zoo, 50 Glow, 50 Dark, 1 Soul and 1 Time.

Smoke Line
800 Air, 1000 H20, 20 Glow, 1 Soul.

Smokescreen
Score 100,000 points in a 5 minute time war.

Speeder lock
1024 H20, 255 Soil, 350 Herb, 20 Dark, 1 Soul, 1 Time.

Super Rocket
80 Air, 80 Fire, 1111 Iron.

War Axe
500 Herb, 400 Zoo.

X Bomb
500 Fire, 500 Soil, 5 Glow, 1 Time.

Cross Bomb
See the true ending for the Straight route.

Eraser
Get five other players' profiles.

Fury Hammer
Complete the Multi route.

Rare Metals
You need to get nine endings to unlock the two rarest Meteos in the Fusion menu.

Rare Metal – Soul
500 Fire, 500 H20, 500 Zap, 500 Zoo and 200 Glow Meteos.

Rare Metal – Time
500 Air, 500 Soil, 500 Iron, 500 Herb and 200 Dark Meteos.

100 Air, Fire, Soil and H2O Meteos
Finish a 100-Meteo War in 10 seconds or less.

△ You have to fuse blocks to make extra weapons.



△ This is the upper screen – not much goes on up there.



SEND US YOUR SECRETS

Have you found a secret in *Pac 'n' Roll*? Maybe you've got a new helpful hint for *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*. If you have found any cool secrets or smart tricks in any of your DS or GBA games, we want to hear from you. Send us your secrets and we'll print the best ones, and the best entry will win a game. But, be warned: if we catch you cutting and pasting cheat codes from the internet, we'll get rather cross. Post your entries to Pocket Tips, **NGC**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, bath, BA1 2BW. Or Email your entries to ngc@futurenet.co.uk (title the email Pocket Tips).



△ **Pacy and highly addictive, this is the best puzzler on DS.**

100 Iron, Zap, Zoo and Herb Meteos
Play three wireless matches.

Unlockable Planets
Get the Meteos listed below and fuse them in the fusion shop to unlock planets.

Brabbit
1800 Air, 150 Fire, 150 Water, 150 Earth, 150 Zap, 150 Herb, 150 Zoo, 1 Soul.

Cavious
1 Air, 400 Fire, 1 Water, 2000 Earth, 500 Iron, 400 Zap, 400 Herb, 1 Zoo, 1 Glow, 1 Dark, 2 Time.

Dawndus
300 Air, 1200 Fire, 300 Earth, 700 Herb, 700 Zoo, 10 Glow.

Forte
2980 Earth, 1 Zoo, 8 Dark.

Frizam
100 Air, 200 Water.

Gigagush
20 Air, 10 Fire, 30 Water, 300 Iron, 1500 Zoo, 30 Dark, 1 Soul.

Globin
3333 Zoo, 666 Dark, 3 Soul



△ **Once you've started playing *Bomberman* you'll never stop.**



△ **He could drink a carrot smoothie, but Sam Fisher likes to use the tried and tested (and less disgusting) method of seeing terrorists in the dark – Night vision.**

Gravitas
1221 Earth, 1441 Iron, 121 Zap, 161 Zoo, 1 Time.

Hevendor
777 Air, 777 Fire, 777 Water, 777 Earth, 777 Iron, 777 Zap, 777 Herb, 777 Zoo, 77 Glow, 77 Dark, 1 Soul, 1 Time.

BATMAN BEGINS



Hard Mode
Complete the game once.

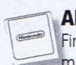
Level Select
Complete the game and collect all 16 bat symbols.

BOMBERMAN DS



Super Danger Bomb
Kick two rubber bombs into each other to create a Super Danger Bomb.

ANOTHER CODE



Alternative Ending Sequence
Finish the game twice to get a bonus mail after the ending sequence.

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY



Alternative Character Skins
Complete the game.

Unlock Costumes
To put on a new costume, go to the Options menu, select Extra and then click on Enable Outfit.

Snow Guard Outfit
Find the wrench in the bathroom of the Battery level. The costume is in a U-shaped room with two cameras and four lasers. Go into the keycard room, take out the guard in the right corner and climb onto the crate. Turn towards the next crate and select the option 'Bash Door'. The costume will be in this room.



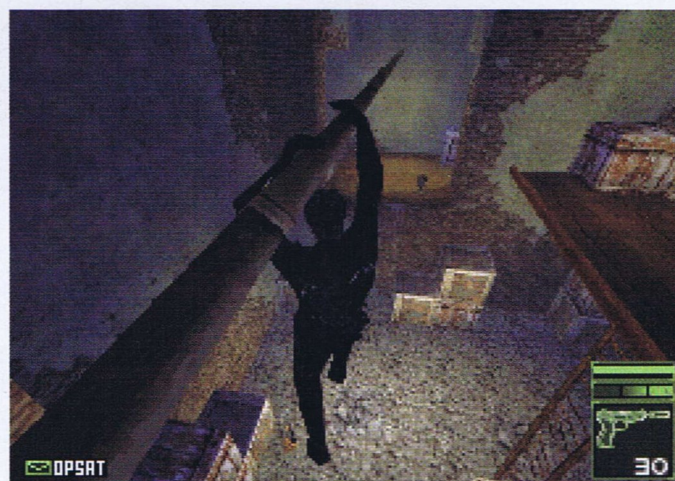
△ **Lockpicking is fun on DS as you use the stylus to get the door open.**

Displace Mercenary Outfit
Go to the third floor of the Display level. Keep looking behind every door with the optic cable until you see the green package. The code for this room is 5800.

Argus Mercenary Outfit
You will reach a hallway after you fall out of a vent in the Machi Akko level. You need a lockpick to get into these three rooms, the third of which contains a closet. When you reach the bar, get on the stage and say something into the microphone. A keycard should now appear – this will unlock the closet that contains the costume.

Shadownet Agent Outfit
In the Kokubo Sosho level, go down to the lift shaft with the lasers at the bottom. When you get to the bottom, find the ladder and climb it. You will now be in a smaller room with lasers. The costume is in the far corner.





△ **It's lucky the Splinter Cell goons never bother looking up or Sam Fisher's main stealth tactic would be screwed. He's have to hide in a box or something...**

NGC POCKET

END BIT • END BIT • END BIT



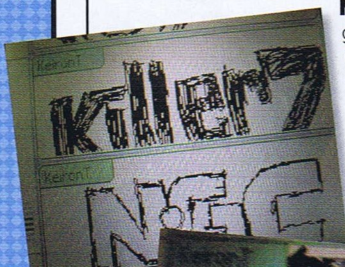
PICTO ANIMATIONS

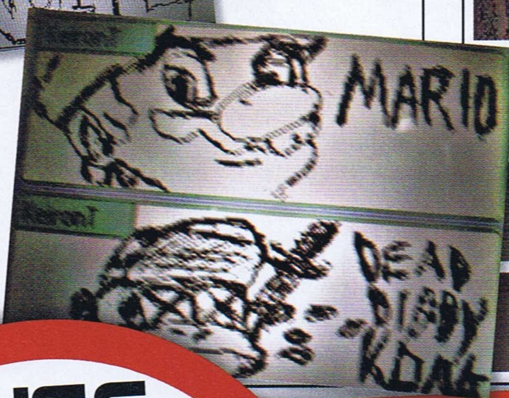
You draw 'em, we print 'em, you get the credit.

When we came up with the idea for this page, there were two potential downfalls. Firstly, we weren't sure just how versatile *Pictochat* would turn out to be, and secondly, we didn't know whether any of you could be bothered to actually submit anything! But you've outdone yourselves once again with some cracking artwork and some jaw-dropping animations that have to be seen to be believed. Keep it coming folks, because getting stuff like this really makes our day…

DEAD DIDDY

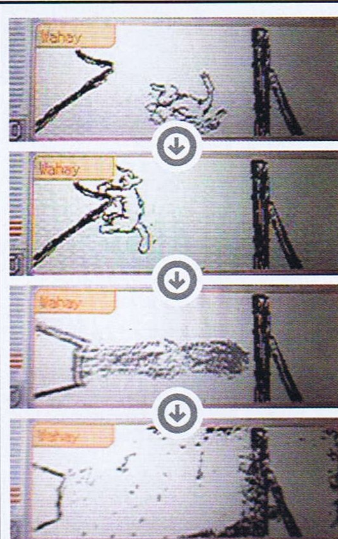
Maybe Keiron Tangue has been playing *Killer 7* too much. It seems to have done strange things to him. He starts by drawing a picture of *Killer 7* and the **NGC** logo, but then he goes on to illustrate Diddy Kong getting a knife through his face. We would say we don't approve of such violence, but it is Diddy Kong… He deserves it.

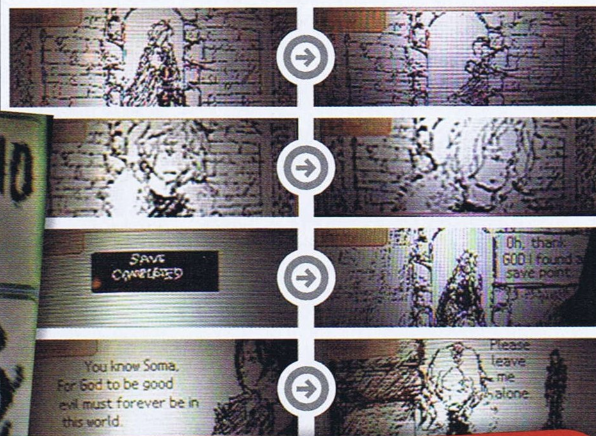


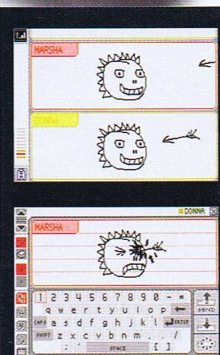


DEAD CAT

Jonathan Duncan has made some of the best Picto animations we've seen since Nobullet's scribbles lit up this page back in issue 106 (Jonathan actually says that he was inspired by Nobullet). Anyway, he's made loads of animations, but our favourites are the Castlevania one below and a non-game related sequence showing a cat climbing into a cannon and being pasted all over a wall. Lovely. If you want to see more of Jonathan's animations go to www.freewebs.com/detailedscribbles/







HOW TO DO IT…

1. *Draw a little picture of something and then click on Send.*
2. *Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.*
3. *Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again, and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth, making all your little changes along the way.*
4. *The amount of space you have left in the message log is shown by the meter to the left-hand side. Keep an eye on it.*
5. *Once you've finished the final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.*
6. *Now hold down the left shoulder button and then half a second later, hold down the right shoulder button.*

NGC POCKET
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

We want your Pictochat artwork

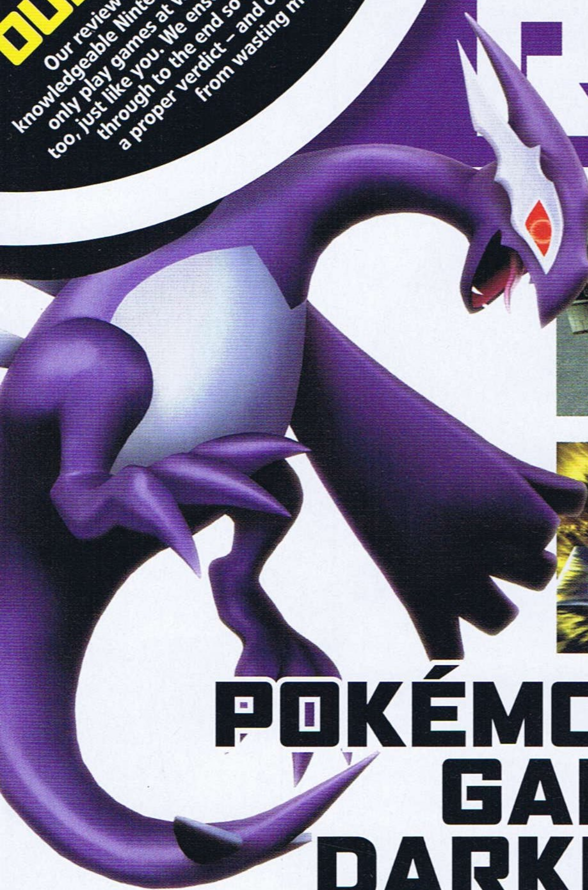
Pictochat is a wonderful tool. Made to be used, but born to be abused. If you've created an animation or piece of artwork that you feel the world has to see, then send it in, but be sure to check out the following instructions. As you can't save your pictures on the DS, this is what we'd like you to do. When you've finished with your Pictoart, turn the lights off, take a photo with a digital camera and send it as an email (titled Pictoart) to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk**. If you haven't got access to a digital camera, just send a normal photograph to:
Pictoart, **NGC** Magazine 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS







POKÉMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

It's taken longer than it should have, but we finally have a proper Pokémon RPG on Gamecube. Sellotape a copy to each shoulder and march proudly through the streets. If anyone asks, mention something about Revolution's controller. It'll be on the internet in minutes. P56



WWE: DAY OF RECKONING 2

The latest Gamecube instalment from the wrestling federation that's just one letter away from spelling WEE. Can it toss the Smackdown! series from its turnbuckle? Read on… P70

PLUS!



GEIST

Hmm. We've been triple-excited about *Geist* for a long time, but now it's here… Well, why not see for yourselves. P64

MARIO BASEBALL

There's a new king of swing in town, and he's going all the way on his first date… P74

RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN

Clancy's boys turn into nancy boys. The only thing they're locking down is the score. P78

HARVEST MOON ANOTHER WONDERFUL LIFE

Stretching the definition of an update to breaking point. Boo. P80

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

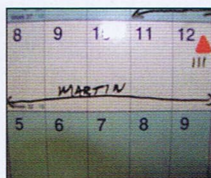


MEET THE NGC TEAM

What thing would we possess in order to take over the world?



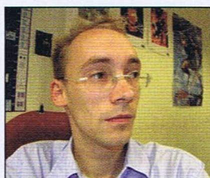
TOM E
"I'd possess George W. Bush and make him press the big red button," said Tom. "I love that BBC Interactive stuff."



MARTIN
"I already rule the world," Martin said sincerely, before washing his hair in a bucket of kitten guts and puppy tongues.



PAUL
"I'd possess a VW Beetle and become the Anti-Herbie," says Paul. "I'd be all friendly until people got in – then I'd eat them."



GERAINT
"I'd possess the Moon and send it crashing into the Earth," said Geraint, not noticing Nintendo's lawyers walking past.



TOM S
"I'd possess Argos and give discounts to everyone," said Tom, realising his dream of uniting the world through catalogues.



GREENER
"I already possess the very limited edition Super Mario Bras misprint for the NES," said Greener, while conquering Budapest.



REVIEW JAP

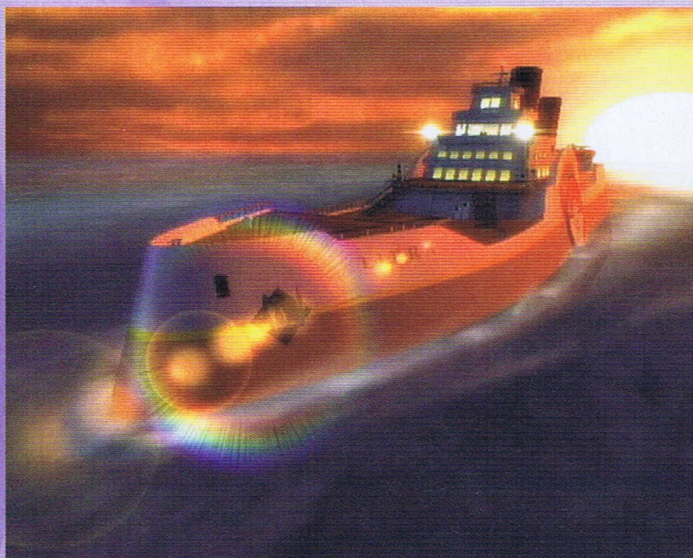


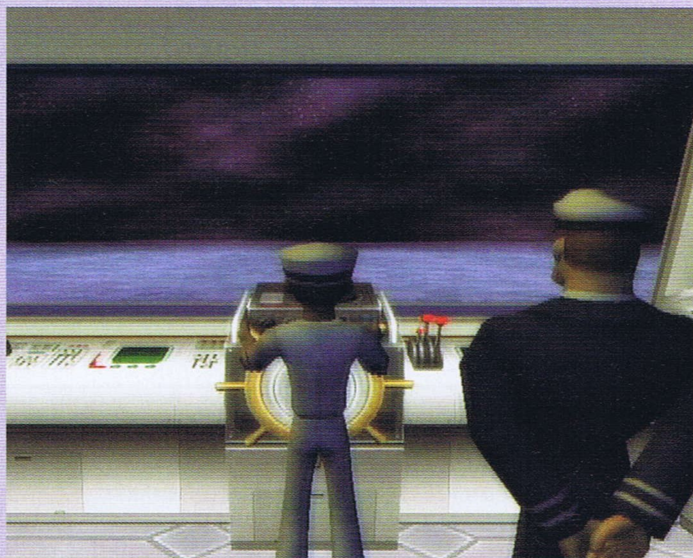
"The real deal"

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTEN[illegible]
DEVELOPER	GENIUS SONORITY
RELEASE DATE	NOV (UK)
PLAYERS	1-4
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	¥5,800 (£30)




Lens flare and a sunset: the perfect relaxing cruise. The opening cutscene is absolutely astonishing and sets the scene for the rest of the adventure perfectly.


The captain's mate steers a ship full of Pokémon species. But they're in for a nasty shock. You can't go shipping Pokémon about in an RPG and expect to get away with it.


All of a sudden the liner is accosted by the choppers.


Lugia casts a shadow (get it?) of doom over the cruiser.


This isn't what you'd expect from a Caribbean cruise, is it?


The captain and his shipmate are knocked overboard.

POKEMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

Explore the world of Pokémon like never before…

It's been 10 years since Game Freak came up with the idea of pocket monsters. Finally, the spirit of the original Game Boy games has been recaptured and reborn as a full-blown Gamecube RPG. Excited? Us? Just a little bit.

XD opens with a cutscene worthy of a much bigger screen. A cruise liner is set upon by a legendary Pokémon and a gang of helicopters from the extra dimension (which is what the XD stands for). The Pokémon, a Shadow Lugia codenamed XD001, drags the liner out from the waters and makes away with it through the night sky. It's a dramatic, well-executed set-piece which immediately establishes the blockbuster style of the game – *Pokémon XD* is the real deal.

An introductory battle follows, but it isn't truly indicative of what's to come. This first virtual battle is a simple one-on-one bout, whereas most of the subsequent battles feature a two-on-two setup. Still, this fight shows off the impressive attack animations as it pitches a level 50 Salamence against a level 50 Metagross.

Soon the Pokémon nostalgia really kicks in. You live with your mother and sister in a house which happens to be next door to Professor Krane's Pokémon HQ, home to the laboratories and researchers. From here you journey into the surrounding countryside. On a scooter.



ON THE HOUR

Most rooms in XD have TVs, but unfortunately there's no Sky Sports. Instead every TV is tuned in to ONBS news, which provides updates on events like Shadow Pokémon getting up to no good, doctors getting kidnapped by Power Rangers, that sort of thing. ONBS: marginally more entertaining than CNN.


The visuals in *XD* are suitably impressive and atmospheric.

"Straightforward, but not simplistic"

PIKA! PIKA!

But what has become of Pikachu?



Grand trainer Eagun makes a reappearance. He lives in a treehouse, but he's no monkey. In fact, Eagun guards Relic Forest, a very important place.



Eagun has a little yellow friend! Yes, there's an opportunity to see the mini-maestro in action as he tests your skills in battle at the entrance to Relic Forest.



Pikachu is a Nintendo icon, but as a forest guardian he isn't a very strong character. And he's all alone against two of our Pokémon. Poor little Pikachu…



But don't feel too sorry for Pikachu – he still has the power to finish off our Poochyena. But then we retaliated using Eevee and 'Pika! Pika!' was heard no more.



Eagun and Pikachu stand defeated, but they honour their promise and grant access to the Relic Stone in Relic Forest, where you can purify a Shadow Pokémon from your ranks.





△ The different locations throughout the game are easily navigated with the handy addition of a world map, accessible via your PDA. Then you get to travel there on a mod-style scooter. Brilliant.

Unfortunately, the scooter is not controllable, but we'll let it pass.

At first you can't access any areas apart from Ash's home and Professor Krane's lab. But after interacting with the characters and searching through the house for your little sister Jovi, your mother sends you on your first mission.

A world map displays your next destination as soon as each new mission is announced. Moving around the world is not as engrossing as it could be – there's no Final Fantasy-style wandering involved and no treks. Instead, a single click on a location initiates a cutscene which shows Ash riding down a dirt track on his mod-style scooter.

There's a lot of exploring to do in each area, however. The design of each location is such that you can choose to either follow sequences that progress the story, or take time out to investigate less central places and meet unimportant, but not uninteresting, characters. The advantage of following the second route is that more level-up opportunities arise, extra side-quests appear, and new items can be found and bought. You're rewarded for not rushing through the game and as a result, you can easily get a good 20+ hours of engaging play from the main adventure.

Although you begin the adventure with just one monster, other Pokémon become catchable

GENIUS | SONORITY

GENIUS?

Game Freak and Nintendo have developed most of the previous Pokémon games, but Colosseum and XD were developed by Genius Sonority Inc. This small Japanese developer has only 33 staff members and began life in 2001. Nintendo and The Pokémon Company are shareholders in Genius Sonority. So there you have it!







△ Although you don't control the scooter, the travelling scenes look awesome.



△ Someone's about to have their teddy bear taken away from them…



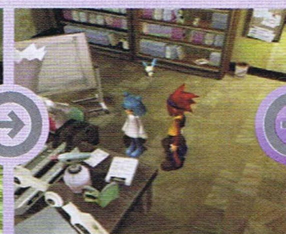
△ Your family, by some happy coincidence, live right next door to Professor Krane's Pokémon centre.


△ The rotating bridges at the port give access to offshore retreats.

GADD ALL OVER

Doesn't that lab-coat wearing crank look like Professor E Gadd from Luigi's Mansion. You'll have to battle him in the house, which is one of the most atmospheric areas in the game.






when a scientist comes up with a revised version of the Snag Machine, which enables you to snag other trainers' monsters during battles. There are 83 Shadow Pokémon scattered throughout the game, all of which can be caught in this way.

You can hold up to six Pokémon in your line-up, and you can make substitutions in battle. It's a versatile system that really gives it the spirit of a traditional team-based RPG – maybe this isn't the place to confess such things, but we quickly developed an emotional attachment with a Spheal.

In fact, organising and looking after Pokémon is one of the most enjoyable parts of the game. The inventory and menu system is straightforward, but not overly simplistic. You can access the data at any time by using your PDA. From there it's easy to add or delete moves, check on the stats of your Pokémon, evolve them and arrange their formation.

COMIC TWIST

Your little sister Jovi is a troublemaker. She runs into a dodgy-looking guy called Zack at Gateon Port, calls him uncle (that's very rude in Japan) and he gets worked up about it. He produces a Pokémon and threatens to battle, but then some old geezer comes along and defeats him. Hurrah for old geezers.

than a minute to get out of the headquarter's grounds and back to where you last were in the game-world. Besides, it's now possible to save anywhere in the game, so it doesn't often come to that.

> **"BY KEEPING THINGS SIMPLE, NINTENDO HAS ENSURED THAT XD IS A FUN RPG"**

You arrive back in your room whenever a challenging trainer defeats you. This isn't as frustrating as it sounds, though, since there is an incubator machine in the same building where you can re-energise your Pokémon. As well as this, due to the map screen, it only takes less

The journey through the main adventure is generally smooth and painless. By keeping things relatively simple, Nintendo has ensured that *XD* is a fun and progressive RPG without any of the niggling problems that dog lesser



ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

The evolution of an Eevee.


Eevee levels up quite quickly, and is very useful once he's been pushed beyond Level 10. Eevee has a move that diminishes the defences of other monsters, so he works well in combination with a Pokémon who has a powerful finishing move.


The opportunity to evolve Eevee comes when you meet a sailor at the harbour. You are given five choices of evolution. The Flareon option here uses a Fire Stone to gain HP. There are four other choices, however…


The Vaporeon is another good bet. It uses the Water Stone to good effect. However, there's no such thing as devolution in XD; you pay your money and take your choice.

DUAL DUELS

Two-player madness.



There is an option called Quick Battle for two players (one of whom can be CPU-controlled). It's pretty much as it sounds, letting you set up a quick scrap with no need for messing about with GBAs and link cables. Nice one.


Pokémon can be selected randomly, but the same monsters are always fairly distributed between both players. Legendary Pokémon are also available in this mode from the beginning, so this is the place for high-level battles.



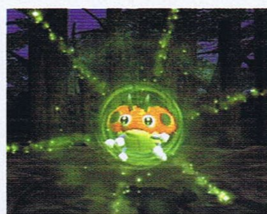
The stage is set for you to take on Dabin at Battle Mountain. The feeling of this being something of an arcade mode is amplified by VS and Win/Lose screens. We were expecting a Capcom announcer to shout 'Fight!'

THE RING

Bringing the Shadow Pokémon down to our level.


Professor Krane has revised Team Snagem's Snag Machine. You wear this contraption throughout the game as you have to make use of it every couple of battles.


The Snag Machine is now equipped with an Aurora Catcher. If the other trainer has a Shadow Pokémon, the Aurora Catcher will detect it, and the snag option becomes a reality.


Shadow Pokémon have to be purified at the Relic Stone so they can develop their abilities at a decent rate. Here, a Ledyba gets the purification treatment.


Shadow Pokémon have 12 attacks, but they lose them when they're purified. However, they gain the standard range of attacks and level-up quicker.


These machines are great. Put a Pokémon inside and it will come out as good as new in six seconds. Even better, it's free and you can use it as often as you like.


New moves will occasionally appear during a battle. When the blue bar beneath a Pokémon's stats fills up, it will trigger a level-up and bring a new attack into play.


The active volcano of Battle Mountain is also a location in XD's main RPG mode. Here, however, it provides a dramatic backdrop for the multiplayer game. But there are also other battle arenas set in the same world.


Nendle's attack lights up the night sky something special. But just because the moves look good, that doesn't mean they're the most effective. The effectiveness of different strategies varies on each opponent, so you need to mix it up.


Battle commands take a different format in Quick Battle mode, with each primary attack accessed by holding R and tapping the C-Stick. It makes for a quicker pace which means that it's fun to dip in and out of two-player mode.



You can only snag other Pokémon if you have Pokéballs to contain them. So be sure to ask friends and check at shops and Pokémon Centres so you can keep a good supply.



Sometimes it's impossible to snag even a Shadow Pokémon right away. If it's a powerful monster, you have to deplete its energy before you can capture it.



Once the Pokémon are caught, they're added to your team for the next battle. Occasionally, you can use another trainer's Pokémon against him in a subsequent bout.



This Shadow Rush attack can inflict considerable damage. You can tell if it's a standard or Shadow Pokémon by checking the colour of its stats bar. Purple spells Shadow!


As is traditional in RPGs, XD reports all level increases at the end of each battle. It also follows the tradition of blurring the screen and changing the music before each scrap.



Eevee's Batsugun attack is a formidable weapon. Yep, even a basic, low-level Pokémon can pull off some fantastic-looking moves in this game.


Shadow Pokémon have two advantages over standard ones: their levels are higher and their Shadow attacks are very potent against regular Pokémon.



REVIEW JAP

"A delicious slice of role-playing cake"

DUSTMEN KIDNAPPERS!

Professor Krane is kidnapped by a bunch of bin men in Power Rangers outfits. And there's nothing you can do about it. You do snag one of their Pokémon, but they still get away.











MAPPED OUT

XD's world map may look like an N64 throwback, but it's pretty useful and astonishingly simple to negotiate. The screen automatically cuts to the world map when a new mission begins. After that, you can return to locations you have visited whenever you like.



For some reason, this old dear's hobby is to train Pokémon.

games. And that's the definition of good game design, so give the developers a pat on the back.

It's no surprise that battles are the main feature, but they've never looked so good. In Genius Sonority's last effort, *Pokémon Colosseum*, character animations were blocky and the character models weren't particularly impressive. Although *XD* makes use of the same engine, the Pokémon themselves have been refined and look much better than they did.

The environments are crisp and full of detail. Some of the graphical touches are superb – the dust that blows through the desert areas is some of the driest dust we've seen away from our living-room window sills, while the verdant luxury of Relic Forest is even more chlorophyll-soaked than it appeared in *Colosseum*. The only minor gripe we have with the visuals is its world map, which doesn't look great. And, although not directly a graphical issue, not having a controllable camera is inhibiting. The system used is excellent – the camera never gets stuck or awkward, but we've come to expect full director's control from Nintendo games. Shame.

We have no complaints about the sound, however. It is, in part, the same soundtrack as that of *Colosseum*, but the tunes in that game were great and so too are the new cuts in *XD*. It's music you can whistle or tap your foot to, but it's also wholly inoffensive and by the numbers, so it won't distract

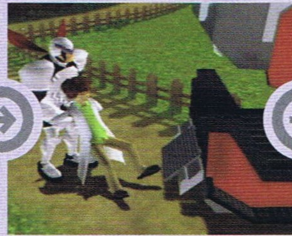


FAB FOUR

***Pokémon XD** shapes up nicely for GBA players. With GC-to-GBA link cables, up to four LeafGreen/FireRed/Emerald players can hook up to do battle with their Pokémon. They can also set the rules for battles – which level to play at, which moves to use, and whether to include Legendary Pokémon or not.*













△ **You have to win a succession of three battles inside Battle Mountain. Makes sense.**



△ **It's a shame that we don't get this sort of view more often in *XD* as the backgrounds are highly detailed and an absolute delight to behold. Shame we can't control the camera, though.**



△ **There are 83 Pokémon to collect in this instalment. Best start catching 'em all…**



△ **Pokémon – a man's best friend. Even if they don't look like a dog.**



△ **Your little sister Jovi gets you into all sorts of trouble. As little sisters always do…**

from the weightier matters at hand (just like Coldplay, really).

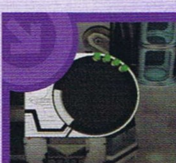
There are a few essential ingredients that must be used in order to bake a tasty RPG cake. Firstly, a good story. *XD's* is great – it starts off intriguingly, and it twists and turns nicely right up to the last boss battle. You also need interesting characters, and *XD's* cast is full of memorable and idiosyncratic trainers, scientists, inhabitants and, um, sailors. Finally, you need a clever battle system – *XD's* is built on nearly ten years' worth of fine-tuning and development, and it shows.

It's certainly a delicious slice of role-playing cake, then. However, the solid and well-produced RPG element seems to have resulted in the sacrifice of some features outside the main game (like those found in *Colosseum*, or even the old Pokémon Stadium titles). The Game Boy link-up feature is cool if you want to battle the Pokémon you've collected in the GBA games or if you want to trade Pokémon between *XD* and FireRed/ LeafGreen, but there isn't much beyond this basic facility other than a couple of mediocre minigames.

After trying their hand at *Colosseum*, it seems that Genius Sonority, a relatively new company, have discovered the two strands that make a great Gamecube Pokémon game – the role-playing adventure and the Game Boy interaction. Here's hoping that the next game will bring *XD's* better half together with *Colosseum* and *Stadium's* focus on linked play, and make the recipe even tastier. But as it stands, *XD* is a straight Pokémon RPG. Done very well. On the GameCube. And that has to be worth celebrating.

JONTI DAVIES

"XD'S SYSTEM IS BUILT ON NEARLY TEN YEARS' WORTH OF FINE-TUNING, AND IT SHOWS"



PALM PILOT

You find your PDA before your first mission. It's a very useful tool. It receives emails from other characters with advice on how to proceed, you can access your Pokémon data on it, and it powers up the Aurora Catcher scanning technology, that shows you which Pokémon can be caught using the Snag Machine. Neat.



- Fairly atmospheric.
- Enjoyable co-op.
- Impressively grand in scope.



- Dull presentation.
- Dumb AI.
- There are better games out there.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Pokémon Colosseum
Nintendo
NGC/93, 84%
Not the epic we wanted, but it's fun and Colosseum mode will last you for ages.



7 VISUALS

Impressive special effects and lovely environments.

8 SOUNDS

XD's audio is a perfect complement to the game.

8 MASTERY

The best bits of the original RPGs on a home console.

8 LIFESPAN

There's all sorts to do and see, and a great multiplayer.

VERDICT

_XD_ gives us what we've all what we've been waiting so long for. This is the game _Colosseum_ should have been.

NGC

86



"Brief flashes of brilliance"

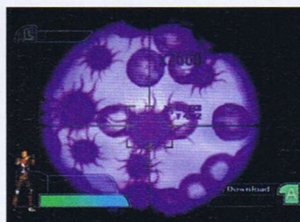


GEIST

The long awaited ghost-based shooter puts the frighteners up us… For all the wrong reasons.

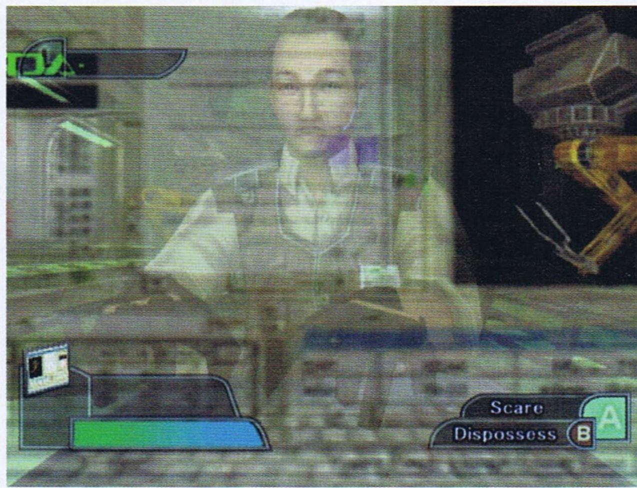


△ We particularly like the way you often see your character's hands interacting with stuff – giving a great sense of connection to the environment.





△ The opening suggests that things are going be more exciting than they are.



△ Possessing a computer terminal – this guy's going to get the fright of his life.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	N-SPACE
RELEASE DATE	15TH OCT
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40

Given that the Gamecube hasn't really had its fair share of first person shooters, you could easily understand why we were looking forward to this. *Geist*'s pedigree isn't exactly the best, but after so many delays to improve the gameplay, we were pretty confident that it would at least be a decent game. And to a point it is. Kind of.

On paper *Geist* sounds pretty tasty, you have your standard FPS action, but the developers N-Space have added a particularly clever gimmick – this time you're a ghost, and you have all the abilities that ghosts traditionally have. So there is a large scope for some original and interesting set-pieces. The concept sounds clever, as do all the other ideas crammed into the game. That is until you look at the way it all hangs together…

You see, *Geist* is patchy and wildly inconsistent. It's trying to be too many things to too many people. One minute you're playing a generic shooter, the next you're treated to – no, *teased* by – some brief flashes of brilliance. You'll be convinced things are shaping up to be pretty good, but the next thing you know, you're suffering at the hands of some of the most idiotic and downright awful game design we've ever come across.

The first thing you'll notice is that it's not the most elegant game ever produced. The textures are muddy, the lights have a white glare effect similar to *Perfect Dark* and the controls feel sluggish, particularly where the look/aim analogue controls are concerned. 'Still', you'll think to yourself as you're sniggering at the awkward character animation, 'it's early days, and it's certainly not the end of the

"THE FIRST THING YOU'LL NOTICE IS THAT IT'S NOT THE MOST ELEGANT GAME…"



RUBBISH

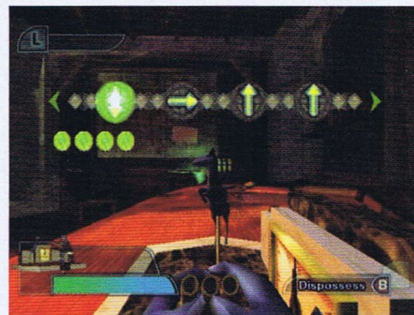
Every time you possess a character, you can see them shuffling around in the corner of the screen. It looks rubbish. Everyone who sees it simply can't understand why it's there. Unfortunately, it seems like there simply isn't a point to it.



This is Gigi in happier times. Initially, her story is one of the more interesting parts of the plot.



As a ghost, the game is far better, as there's an eerie atmosphere and a gentler pace to the action.



Additions like this rhythm minigame can feel tacked-on, and are pretty frustrating at times.

FRIGHT NIGHT

You have to scare the NPCs to possess them. Here's how it works.



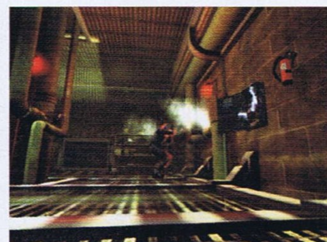
As a ghost, time around you slows down, so there's no real hurry. However, you can only survive as a ghost for a limited time. To regain health you have to suck the life from plants or possess objects – or better, people.



NPCs have three states of stress – indicated by the colour of the aura around them. White indicates that they're fine, yellow shows that they're slightly worried, while red means they're scared and ripe for the possessing.



To increase their level of stress, you need to interact with objects around them. This can mean anything, from possessing a bin and shaking it when they pass to making nearby machines attack them.



More often than not, a single attempt won't be enough, so you have to scare them in two stages. In this case, making a ladder fall to get them worked up before possessing a pressure gauge and making it go critical.

world.' Sure enough, you'll play through the first level with that optimistic 'I've-played-worse' attitude. You'll probably be cursing the game's refusal to let you alter the analogue sensitivity, but you'll hold firm in the belief that it'll get better when the ghost bits kick in. And it does… At first.

Following your character's 'death' very early in the game (don't worry, this isn't a spoiler), you're whisked away to a computer construct, where your disembodied soul is taught the basics of possession.

As a ghost, the game looks far more alluring, with a grainy, bleached-out effect that, while not exactly stunning, is certainly pretty enough to grab your attention. On leaving this haven, you're also introduced to one of the secondary characters – the ghost of a young girl called Gigi. She then goes on to explain the finer points of your spectral form like slipping through gaps, possessing people and interacting with inanimate objects to scare the NPCs (see the Fright Night boxout).

This new ability lifts your spirits as the concept promises a great deal of potential, while Gigi's character sparks curiosity about who she is and where the story might be heading.

So you keep playing. And although it doesn't take long to realise the ghost sequences are heavily scripted, the feeling of mischief, that you're actually meddling in the affairs of the staff at a



HELLO AGAIN

At the end of the first level, you fight a boss. Nothing too surprising – if it wasn't for the fact that you fight him three bloody times during the course of the game. Unfortunately, this kind of recycling simply isn't forgivable in a modern first person shooter. Rubbish.



At the start you have a few run-ins with Leon, your incredibly grumpy rival. There will be no happy ending for him…

"Woefully inadequate shooting action"

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Some of the sequences and puzzles in the game are very well done – it's just a shame that they're so few and far between. Oh well.



■ As a ghost, you find yourself trapped at the bottom of a pit with no way out. The only things you can interact with are a couple of halogen lamps…



■ … By possessing one of them and shining it at the bats in the pit, you can blow the bulb up to send them fluttering around the cave.



■ Now that the bats are scared, you can possess one of them and escape the caves by rapidly tapping the A button to flap its wings. On to the base…



■ On leaving, you'll find a lone technician walking around outside the base. You need to scare him, then possess him in order to infiltrate it.



■ Pester the technician to make him worried before possessing a nearby manhole cover. Flipping it will then scare him.



■ When you enter the base, you'll find a guard peeking through a hole in the wall, perving at the ladies from the infirmary who are taking a shower.



■ Leave your host's body, use your spectral form to slip through the hole in the wall and then possess one of the shower heads.



■ You can now spray one of the women in the shower area to get her a little bit more stressed. But it's not enough to scare her properly…



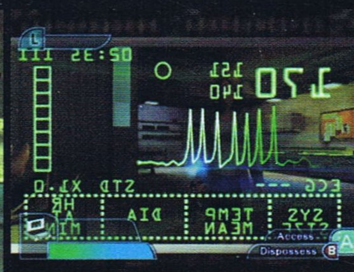
■ … To really terrify her, you need to possess a mirror and then crack it before warping her reflection into something truly ugly.



■ Now that she's frightened, you can take over her body and use it to hunt down her lab coat, complete with a handy security pass.



■ On entering her body, you see one of her memories which shows where she put a vital piece of kit you need to save your sick friend.



■ To get it, you need to distract a guard by entering a patient's heart monitor – sending it into a beeping frenzy and killing him in the process.



△ ***Geist*** **can, at times, be enchanting and hauntingly beautiful.**



SPOOKY

One level sees you exploring the derelict mansion of Gigi's family – it's here that we see Geist's true potential. The filter used for the ghost's-eye-view makes the place seem especially eerie and the main puzzle is a delight. Which suggests that Geist could actually have been something pretty special.

military complex, is conveyed pretty well. It's unfortunate that the ghost aspect of the game isn't explored further, because *Geist* is really at its best when it's not trying to be a first person shooter.

There are many segments in the game that revolve around possessing numerous people or objects, solving puzzles and completing objectives with characters that don't wield a weapon. In one sequence, for example, you have to clear an entire canteen of guards by poisoning their food. On other occasions you have to use animal hosts to your advantage. You can possess a rat to move through small tunnels, for example, or take over a dog to scare the commander of the facility.

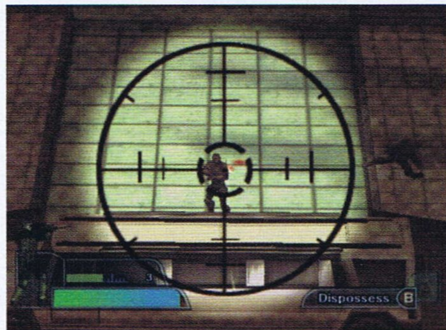
These parts feel much more like a classic adventure game rather than an FPS, and are actually rather clever, enjoyable and can give the game a unique atmosphere.

"GEIST IS REALLY AT ITS BEST WHEN IT'S NOT TRYING TO BE A FIRST PERSON SHOOTER"

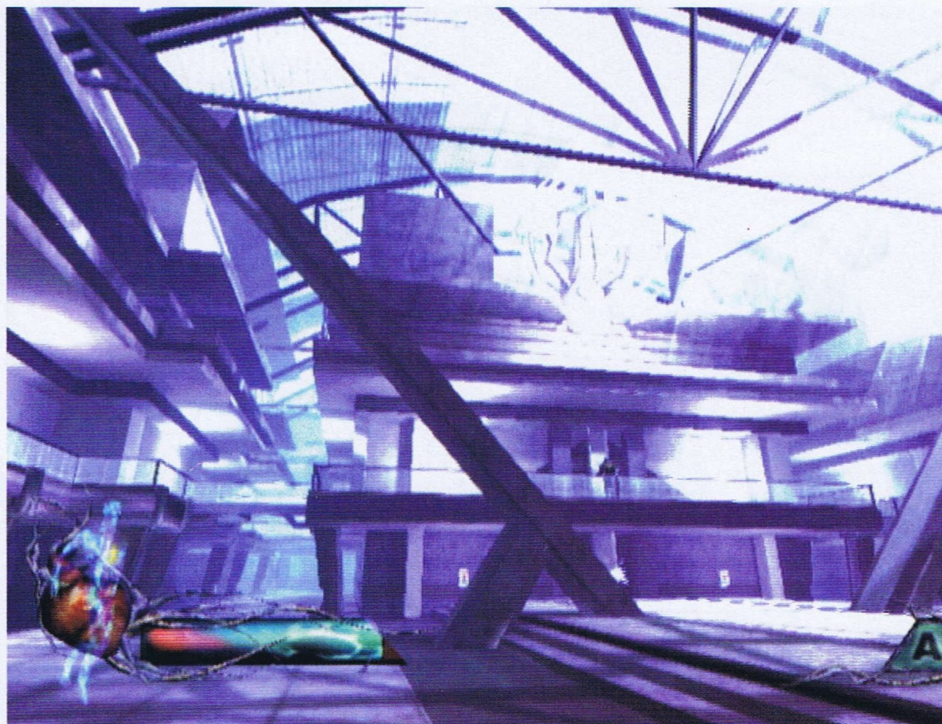
So it's a shame that there isn't more of this atmospheric action, as no sooner do you settle into the



△ This is a computer construct for an assassination…



△ … Sadly, it doesn't gel with the rest of the game.



△ It may look nice, but this is just a shooting gallery section. It feels utterly pointless.



△ Chucking plates, poltergeist-style.



△ A guy washing his face with blood.



△ You can take over missiles and fire them at the guards to protect your friend.



△ Use mines to take down the turrets.


△ The red aura means he's scared.

adventure side of things, than you will be forced into a gun-toting body for another slice of woefully inadequate shooting action. In fact, it's virtually impossible to catalogue all of *Geist*'s failings where the FPS action is concerned, simply because there are so many. However, there are specific, niggling things about the shooting that are simply inexcusable.

Firstly, the weapons feel completely insubstantial. The fact they all have infinite ammo isn't really a problem, seeing as battles hardly ever transcend more than a handful of rooms, but the fact they feel so light, so weak and so pitiful is very disappointing. Even your final weapon is incredibly puny – and forces you to use its secondary grenade function (accompanied by a truly *awful* 'peew' sound) if you want to make any headway.

Also, the problems with the controls are really highlighted when fighting. For example, headshots aren't as simple as they should be because you're fighting the less-than-subtle controls, which makes fine tuning your aim a case of luck over judgement and turning on the spot sluggish and unwieldy. Thankfully though, the difficulty level (or rather lack of) is such that it's excusable to a point which, unfortunately, is something that can't be said for other aspects of the game…

The final nail in *Geist*'s ghostly coffin is its almost astounding patchiness. Throughout the course of ▶



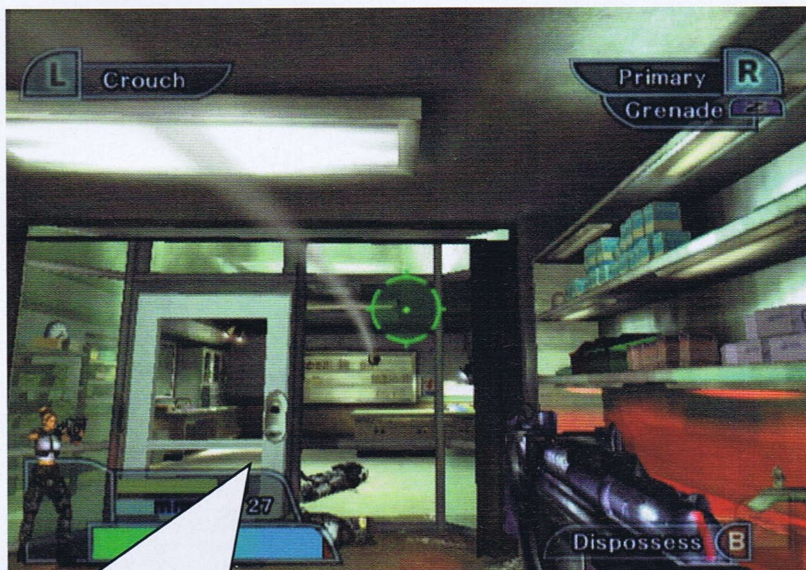
COLLECT

This strikes us as a bit strange, if only because it's another example of the game jarring and pulling you back to reality. There are two kinds of collectable: ghost collectables, which extend your health meter and host collectables which unlock multiplayer levels. Why on earth are there collectables in a serious shooter?



△ You can possess this bike for a truly rubbish driving section.

"A mess of a game"

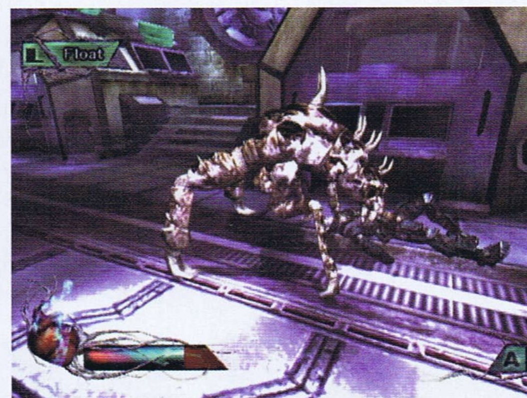


OH MY GOD

Some flaws in Geist simply beggar belief. Doors that have only just been opened are miraculously closed when you enter ghost form (despite time slowing down when you do so), grenades bounce off invisible walls when they shouldn't and some parts are simply broken. For example, one puzzle required us to blow up some halogen lamps (see the As Good as it Gets boxout) but the first time we tried it, the game never gave us the option, forcing us to quit the level and start again. Are we really supposed to put up with this rubbish?



△ One minute you're in a lab, the next a subway. Hmmm...



△ *Geist* degenerates into a depressing bug hunt.



△ Many of the puzzles are annoyingly workmanlike.





△ You'll need this suit to cross any contaminated areas.



△ The can of soup that took us an astonishing 45 minutes to find! What's up with that?

the game, you're witness to a myriad of different ideas. There are so many disparate concepts, and unfortunately they never really gel. The result is a mess, and although these concepts work in theory, it feels like they've been put into the game with little regard as to how they're supposed to fit together, let alone how they make the player feel.

The environments, for example, differ so wildly you never really understand what the hell is going on. One minute you're fighting through a train, the next there's a distinct sci-fi feel, and after that you're in what looks like ancient Greece, fighting giant stone statues with laser-eyes.

"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SMALL DETAILS THAT SEEM TACKED-ON FOR NO REASON"

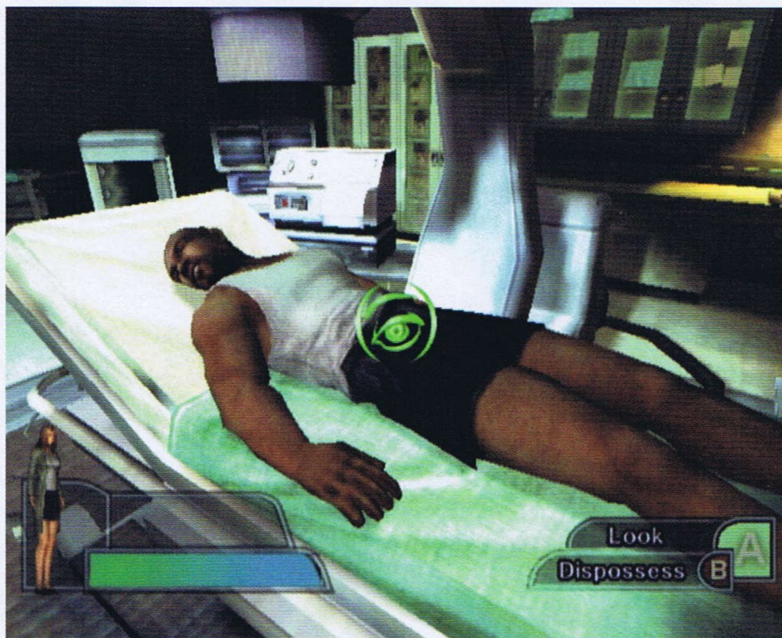
The result is a mess of a game that never really flows properly, with a pacing that's all out of whack. You'll be flying through the game at one point, the next you're wandering around aimlessly, looking for something, *anything* you can interact with in order to

GEIST

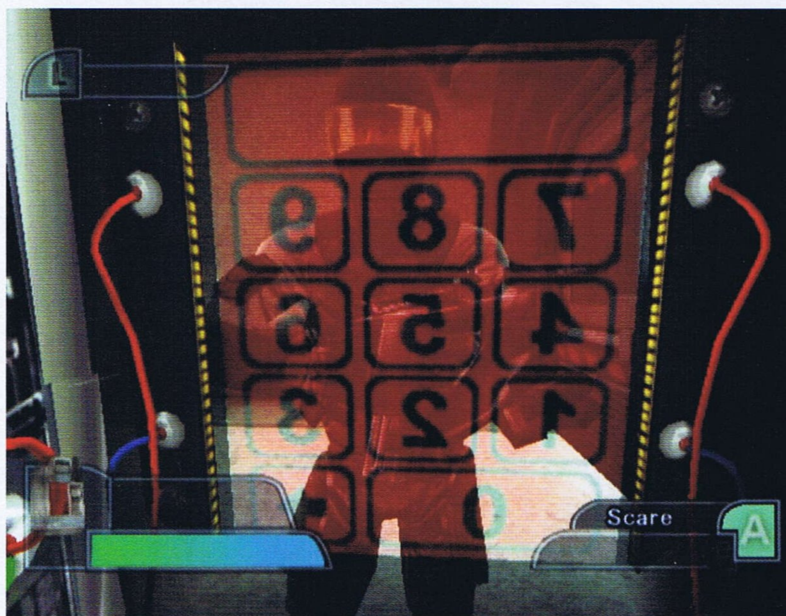
Get into the spirit of things. Or not.


Possess a dog's food bowl and you'll scare him, making him a vulnerable host.

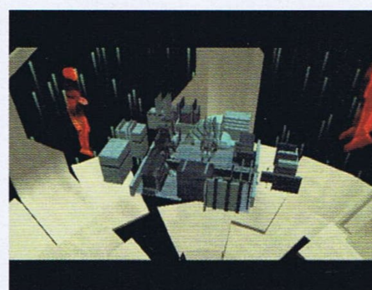

The lab is home to soul-extraction testing.



Your friend here is in trouble – you need to find the serum to help revive him.



In a rather clever touch, you can enter keypads and watch the guards enter the door code.




It's great watching slow-motion deaths.

progress. In one case, we spent 45 minutes looking for a can of soup we didn't even know we needed until, purely by chance, we saw our cursor highlight it in passing.

It's not just the vagueness of your objectives that's disappointing, either. There are a number of small details that seem tacked on for no reason. There's a stupid little rhythm game that crops up for a couple of minutes. Or there's the truly irritating Simon-says-style game where you have to hammer rivets (yes, rivets) into panels. With all that's gone before, these games seem completely out of place

If ever there was a case for the importance of taking a single core idea and exploring it fully (even if it means a shorter game), then this is it. *Second Sight* for example, did it perfectly – Free Radical built the game around its core ideas of extra sensory perception, possession and telekinesis and wrapped it up in a superb plot.

Geist simply has a handful of ideas, some of which are brilliantly executed, some of which aren't and they've simply been slapped on top of a very average shooter. It wouldn't be quite so bad if, after all these disappointments, there was an engaging storyline to keep your interest, but there isn't.

Initially, it's intriguing – particularly when it comes to learning who Gigi is, how she came to be and the exact goings on in the mysterious corporation you're investigating – but the more the game disappoints, the less you find yourself caring. By the time you get to the final boss encounter, you won't care for the characters, you'll grow frustrated by the clumsy, disjointed way the tale is told, and ultimately you'll just want it to end.

Which is sad, because it means that many of you will never get to see those brief moments of brilliance that are hidden in the game, but we simply can't come up with a good enough reason for you to go looking for them.

The truth of the matter is that it looks like N-Space, the developers behind such classics as *Mary-Kate and Ashley: Magical Mystery Mall* and (our particular favourite) *Rugrats: Search for Reptar*, in this case couldn't transfer their skills from toddlers and shopping to ghosts and guns.

GERAINT EVANS



HUNTING PARTY

The multiplayer mode is surprisingly good fun. There are three game modes available initially, all of which revolve around possessing various hosts while gunning down your mates. The arenas are actually nicely designed and the framerate holds up well. Shame it's too little too late, really…



- Great adventure-style missions.
- Some genuinely inventive ideas.



- Feels cobbled together.
- Full of bugs and flaws.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Second Sight
Free Radical
NGC/97, 90%
A game with some similar ideas, but executed with loads of style.



5 VISUALS
It has its moments, but it's mostly bland, with poor animation.

4 SOUNDS
Oddly inappropriate music and weedy weapon effects.

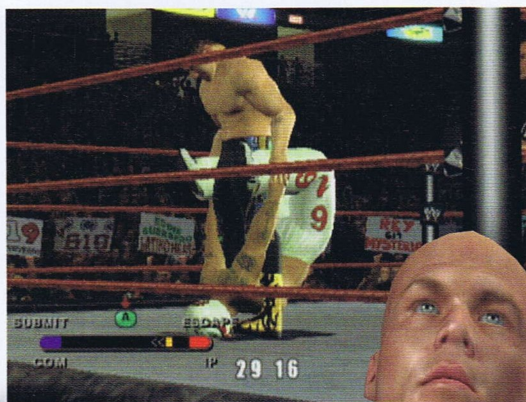
5 MASTERY
Choppy framerate, sluggish controls and terrible design flaws.

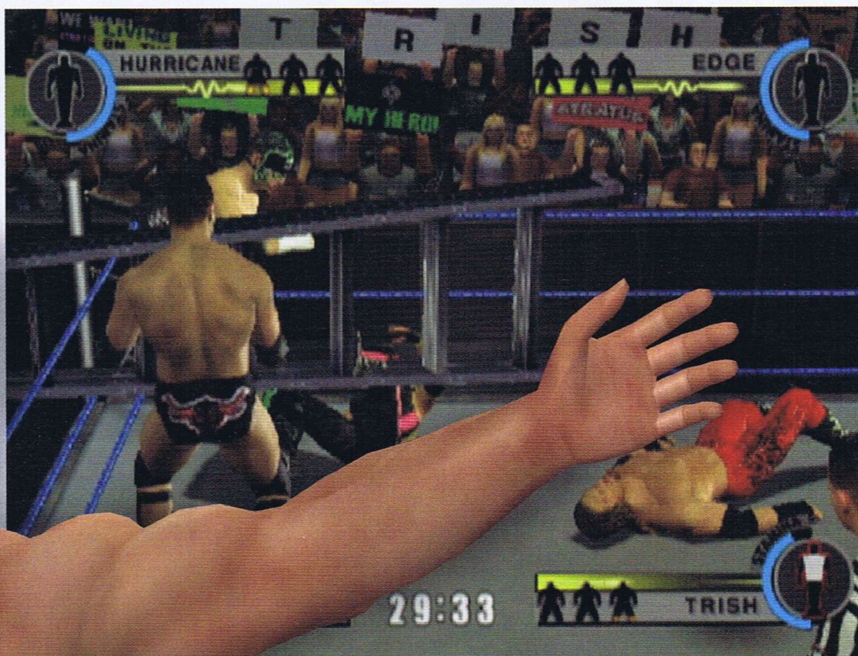
6 LIFESPAN
Fairly long – if a little easy. The multiplayer is mildly diverting.

VERDICT

A melting pot of the brilliant and banal. Sadly, the latter outweighs the former. A real disappointment.

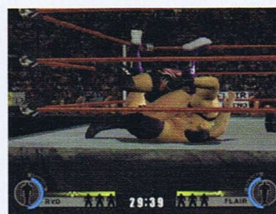
NGC 61

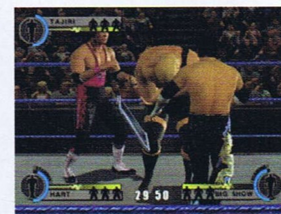

△ Eddie Guerrero does something hideous.



△ Ladder matches can result in carnage. Here, The Rock looks dominant, but it could all change at any second if he lets his guard slip.



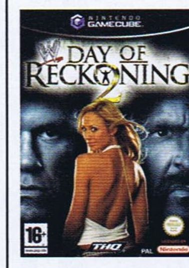




WWE DAY OF RECKONING 2

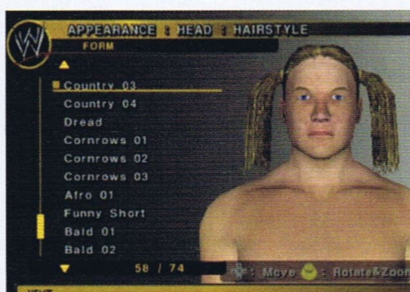
INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	YUKES
RELEASE DATE	SEPT 9TH
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	34
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO





△ The Big Show has a nice, quiet sit down.



△ Here's where you create your own wrestlers.

Def Jam rules the ring! Time for the pro's to strike back…

Optimism can be a wonderful thing. I *will* get that job. She *will* say yes. *Day of Reckoning 2 will* be better than the original. Unfortunately though, while it can lead you to moments of true happiness, it can also lead you down an alleyway and, metaphorically speaking, smash you in right the face with a half-brick in a sock.

Only last month we were proclaiming just how good *Day of Reckoning 2* was going to be. And although it is quite good, having played the final version it's not the title contender we were hoping for. It's flawed, just like the original.

There's nothing fatally wrong with it – it's not as if it crashes as soon as you hit a suplex – but there are noticeable flaws. Although you can ignore them at first, they're so common that they eventually become smothering.

Some of the AI is questionable to say the least – like the way Ric Flair will drop to his knees in his famous 'please don't hurt me' stance, even though you're currently lying face-down on the canvas in dreamland. On other occassions, wrestlers will refuse to finish you off while you're helpless, or never fight back while you smack them about. Then there's the fact that Y is both the run and the 'get out of the ring' button – so when you try to climb between the ropes, you will often find yourself sprinting in the opposite direction instead.

DAY OF RECKONING 2

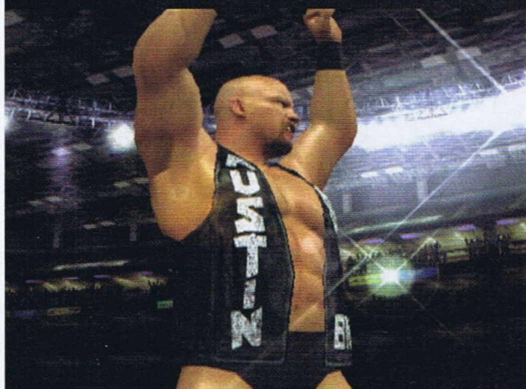
A disappointing day

THE HALL OF FAME

There are a few WWE legends to unlock, too. Here's a small selection…



HULK HOGAN Despite continuing to limp around WWE rings looking increasingly jowly, Hogan retains his superstar status.



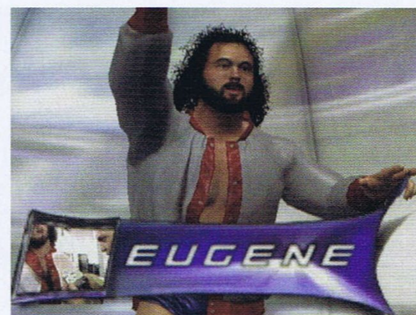
STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN Popular with people who drink too much and swear a lot, Austin drinks too much and swears a lot.



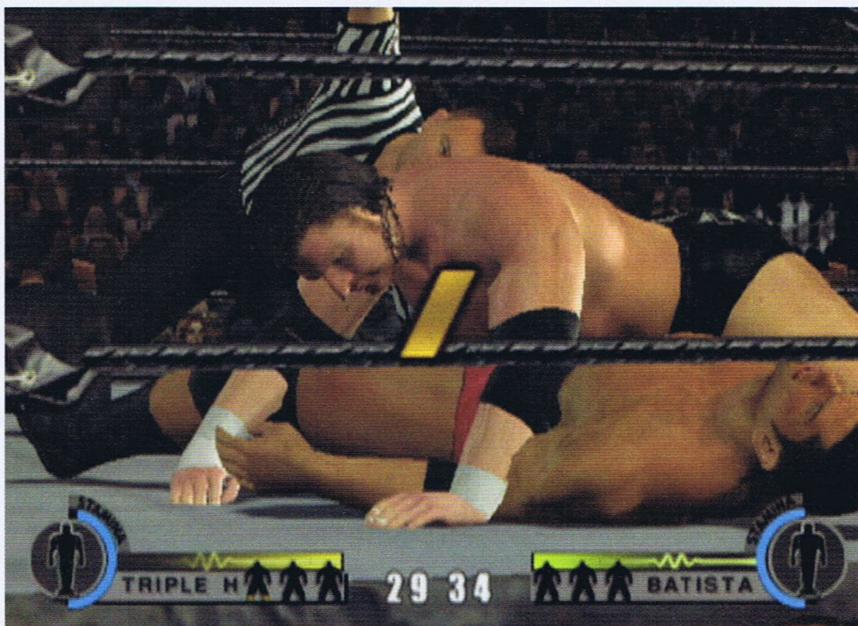
THE ROCK Nonsensical catchphrases, an eyebrow that defies gravity and enough charisma to fill a skip – that's the Rock.



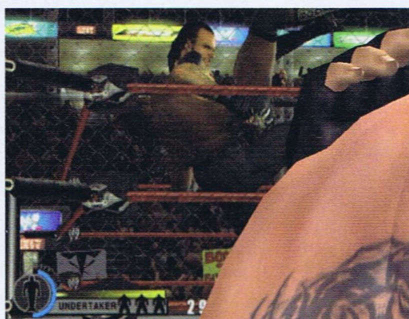
△ Christy Hemme – popular with male fans.



△ Fans' favourite Eugene, who needs a shave.



△ Triple H is as dominant in *Day of Reckoning 2* as is he is real life.





Hammering the A button to escape over the top during cage matches would be fine, except the B button makes you leap off the cage with an elbow drop, and it's preferring to continually aim his blows at the stripey-shirted official on the floor.

Tag matches can go on forever, because no sooner do you go for

> **THERE'S NOTHING FATALLY WRONG WITH IT, BUT THERE ARE NOTICEABLE FLAWS**

all too easy for your finger to slip, making you crash down onto the canvas purely by accident. It's also very simple to accidentally punch the referee when the action gets heated. And when you do, your wrestler will probably refuse to target your opponent again,

the pin, than your opponent's partner sprints in to break it up. Every single time. It seems like a minor thing, but *Day of Reckoning 2* is rife with small problems like these, which chip away at your enjoyment until they just become aggravating.



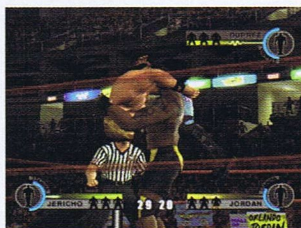
"Minuscule calves"



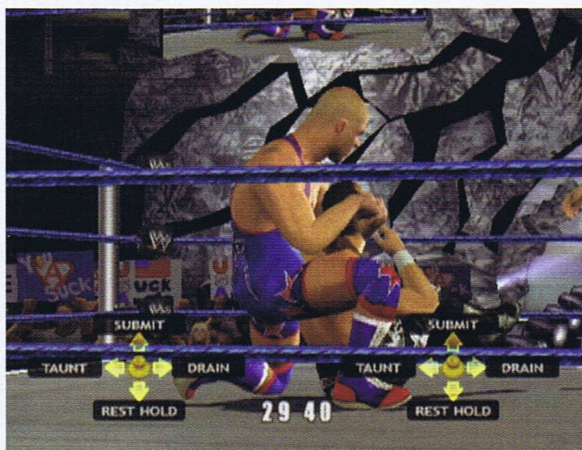
△ Our Story mode character, Cucumber, flattens Triple H.



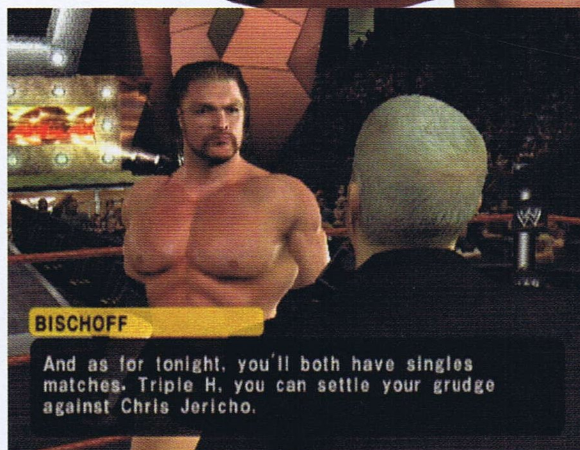
△ JBL: wears a stupid hat.



△ Orlando takes Jericho for a ride.



△ Pick the right option from the menu and you can escape any hold.



△ Triple H unleashes his rage at Eric Bischoff in the Story mode.

That isn't to say it's a bad game, though, because there are some terrific moments. It certainly looks the part as every superstar is instantly recognisable, their entrance scenes are spot on, and it looks as near to perfect as you could imagine. The sound effects are great too, with suitably painful-sounding thumps and crashes as punches land and chairs break, all accompanied by excited gasps, chants and yells from the audience.

As for the bouts themselves, apart from the glitches they're pretty solid. You can button-bash, but that will only get you so far – it's vital you learn the moves.

The momentum shifts work as well as they did in the original – get caught out while doing your finishing move and you'll take loads of damage as your opponent gains a new lease of life.

The new hold system is also a nice addition. If you're put into a headlock, submission move or whatever, you can guess what kind of move your opponent will perform – be it a rest hold, a submission move, a draining move or a light hold. Guess right and you'll escape instantly.

The only problem with this is if you're battling someone who has a submission hold for their finishing move. The on-screen message screams 'Finisher!', but if your opponent is, say, Chris Benoit, you'll know his finisher is the Crippler Cross-Face, a submission move. So you simply select the submission icon and that's it, an easy escape.

Other than these issues all is well – use the right tactics and a small guy can beat a behemoth, you can feel the weight behind the blows, and if it weren't for those flaws all would be peachy. But if you're playing in two-player mode, many of these glitches vanish completely, making things much, much better than if you're on your ownsome.

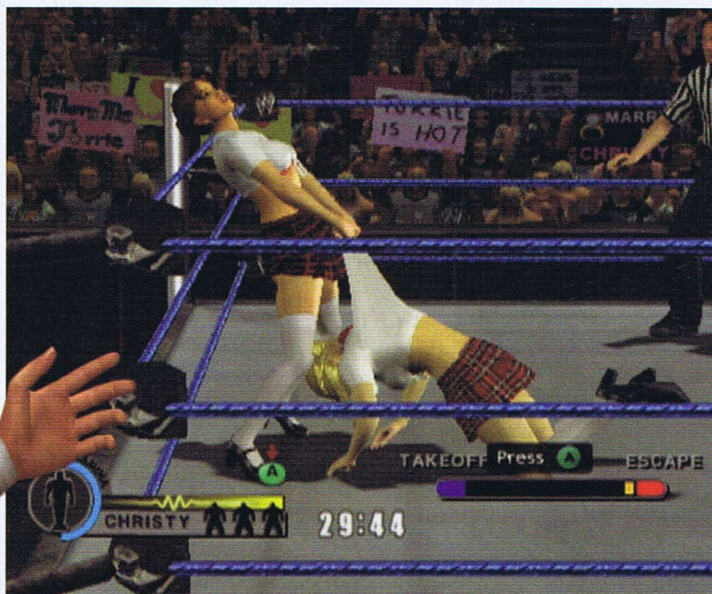
The Create-a-wrestler mode remains intimidatingly deep as ever. Want to create a short, fat man with a geisha girl's haircut, tracksuit bottoms and plaster casts on both arms? No problem. A lanky female wrestler with massive thighs but minuscule calves and a bolt through her nose? Easy. It's a wonderful toy, and one you could easily lose hours of your life playing about with.

TALKING SHOP

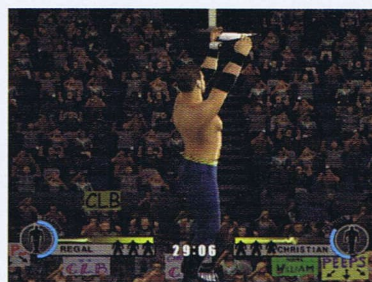
Win matches and you earn money to spend in the WWE shop. It's here that you can buy new arenas to wrestle in – like the Great American Bash or Royal Rumble stadiums – and new move sets, accessories for your create-a-wrestler models, and so forth. Fancy kitting out your bloke in an ice-hockey mask? Now you can.

MATCH MAKER

A selection of the matches of offer in Day Of Reckoning 2.



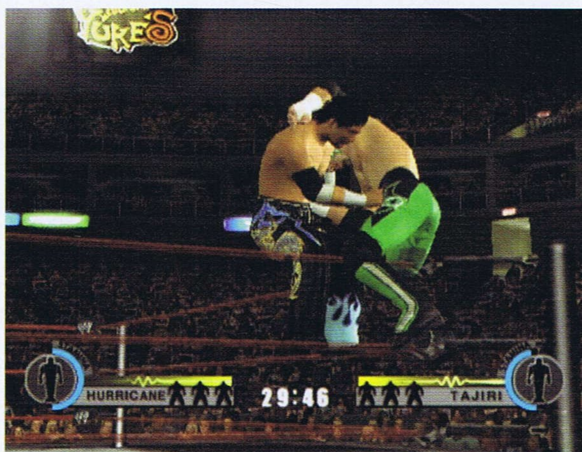
Here's Christy and Torrie in a Bra and Panties match. This contest of 'athleticism' sees the ladies trying to rip each other's clothes off. First down to their undercrackers loses.



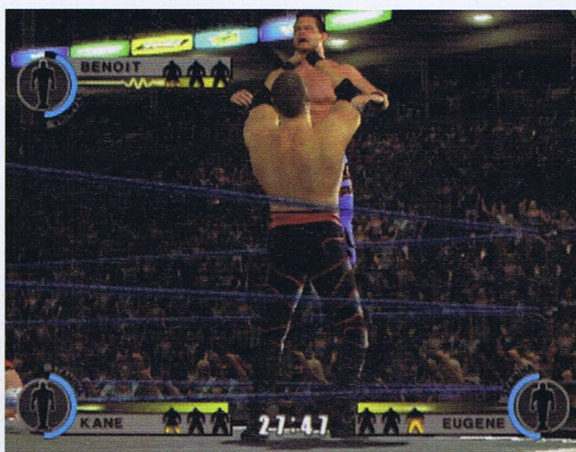
Christian wins his Ladder match.



Taker and Kenzo in a Table match.



Cruiserweight Tajiri gives the Hurricane a top-rope suplex.



Giants like Kane are blessed with colossal power.

The Story mode is also still present and this time it focuses on your battle to regain your recently stolen title belt. Although the plot isn't great, it is better than some current WWE stories – especially the one about the image consultant with a growth on her face that looks like a Rice Krispie cake.

As you progress through the game you earn experience points for upgrading your grappler, and money to buy things from the shop. The more matches you win (matches outside of career mode count), the more wrestlers you can unlock from the Legends roster. Which, this time around, includes the likes of Hulk Hogan, Bret 'The Hitman' Hart and The Rock.

As for the rest of the roster, you've got everyone you could ever want, from the Undertaker to Kurt Angle and Rey Mysterio, to a few you probably wouldn't – like Paul London or the recently-fired Kenzo Suzuki.

Sadly though, *Day of Reckoning 2* is just too similar to the original to warrant a purchase. The previous game suffered from a lack of polish and so does this, and there simply isn't enough here to justify spending the extra cash, unless you haven't played the first *DOR*. As well as this, if the bulk of your playing time is going to be spent on the single-player mode, it's worth thinking before you fork out the cash, because those flaws really do impact on the gameplay.

In two-player mode, though, it's cracking fun – a meaty fighter which will result in the two of you inventing more swear words than the dictionary could ever hold. But ultimately, this isn't the stride forward that we thought it was going to be, and that, quite frankly, is a massive shame. Curse our infernal optimism.

DAVID COOK

> **"THERE SIMPLY ISN'T ENOUGH HERE TO JUSTIFY SPENDING THE EXTRA CASH"**

TUITION PLEASE

There's a hugely comprehensive tuition mode, teaching you every single move in the game. From the basics all the way to the more complex moves. It's split into a series of lectures, with each topic accessible from a menu. It's informative, useful and makes us wish all lectures were as much fun.



- Solid wrestling.
- Great visuals.
- Wonderful Create-a-wrestler mode.



- Riddled with flaws.
- Too similar to *DOR*.
- Too few female characters.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Def Jam: Fight For NY
EA
NGC/99 80%
Entertaining rap/wrestling crossover that should appeal to fans of both genres.



9 VISUALS
Lifelike character models, terrific entrance sequences.

7 SOUNDS
Great theme tunes, and good crashes and bashes.

5 MASTERY
Full of glitches that just get more and more intrusive.

7 LIFESPAN
Lots to unlock in Story mode, and great in two-player.

VERDICT
Fun, but disappointingly glitchy and too similar to the first game. It's only really worth it if you haven't played that one.

NGC 70

SUPER MARIO MIRACLE STADIUM BASEBALL

Or as we're going to call it, Mario Baseball…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO/ NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	UK (TBC)
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	¥7,140 (£35)

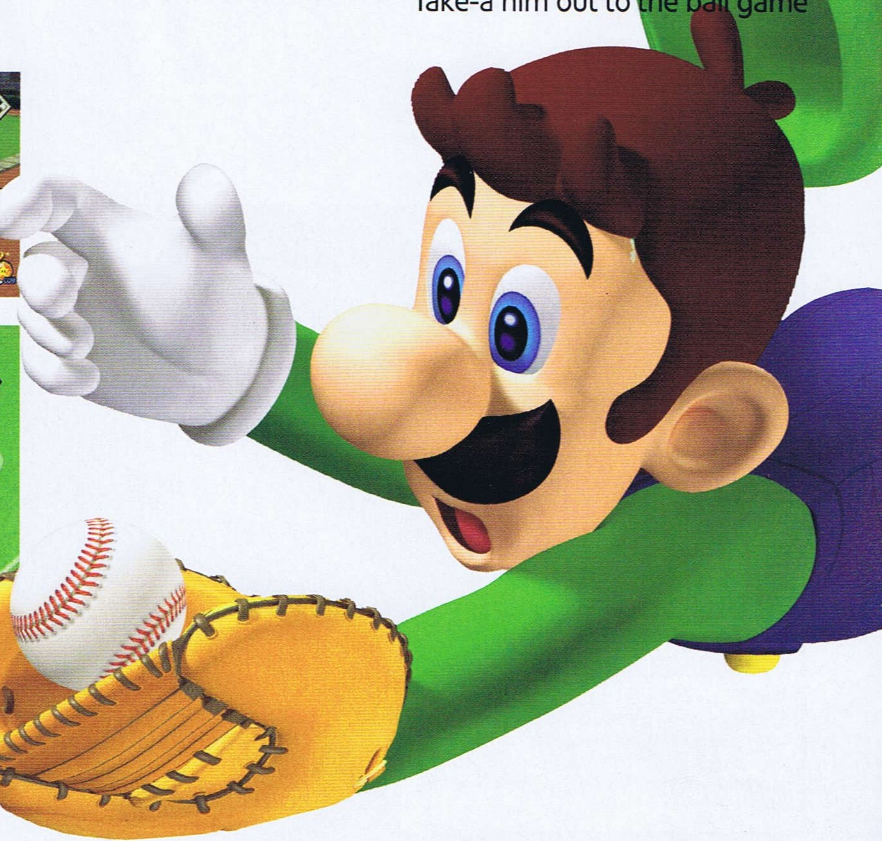


Hweeeah! It must be the most annoying noise since you first heard the Crazy Frog go 'a-ring ding ding ding.' And in *Mario Baseball*, you'll hear that infuriating hweeeah every time you miss the ball. It's the equivalent of an opposition football crowd singing 'you're not very good' when your team has gone 5-0 down.

And the truth is you will miss the ball. A lot. As good as Mario can be at golf and tennis, he's no A-Rod (NY Yankees star who has already hit 30 home runs this season – baseball ed), and he doesn't smack a homer easily. In fact you can forget about home runs for the moment; at first you'll be happy when you actually hear the clunk of bat on ball. The first time you hit the ball is such a momentous occasion, you'll throw your pad down and run around the room doing windmills. Then when you get back to the telly, you'll find that Yoshi has caught the ball with his fat tongue. Thanks.

But then an easy baseball game would be no fun whatsoever. Imagine if you could smash the ball out of the stands at will – you'd just load the bases, get Donkey Kong on strike, wallop a home run with your boxing glove bat and it would be four runs to the Mario Sunshines. Then you could clap your hands over your head and do that 'easy, easy' chant that seems so popular at sporting grounds these days. And that may be even more annoying than the hweeeah. Okay, maybe not.



△ You have to run if you hit the ball, even if it's going straight to first.

IT'S ANOTHER MARIO PARTY



WALL BALL
There are four minigames that are unlocked from the off, and every time you complete a challenge you'll open up another one. Here, you have to judge your pitch in order to the smash the clear, glassy wall. This is actually one of the better minigames.



BIG HITTERS
The best minigame, this is great in multiplayer. Your aim is simply to smash the ball as far as you can. The only problem is that the machine spits the ball out at different speeds, so after hitting a few fireballs, you can be easily fooled by a slower delivery.



IT'S A GEM
You need to leg it around the bases picking up gems. If you run into a special gem, you'll sprint past the other characters and grab them first. But when Chain Chomp wakes up, he'll land on your head, and you'll lose all your gems. This is pretty poor.



HIT THE BARRELS
It's like Puyo Pop with baseball. Hit a coloured barrel and all the barrels of the same colour will be destroyed. That's easy. When your power bar is full, you'll have to hit one barrel. This, however, is very hard indeed as you have to time your shot perfectly.



COLLECT THE COINS
The worst minigame of all. It does kind of resemble a baseball triangle, but really, what does running around collecting coins have to do with baseball? But if you get hit by a falling Thwomp you'll lose all your hard-earned coins. This is rubbish.

So the fact that batting reaches Thwomp levels of rockness is actually a good thing. In any case, once you do some training and get your eye in, you'll be hitting the ball more often than not. The trick is not to look at the pitcher, but at the small triangle in front of the batter. When the ball goes over that it's time to let go of your shot. You can move forward and try to catch it early, or hang back and catch it off the end of the bat (there is also a welcome strategic side to pitching (See Perfect Pitch)).

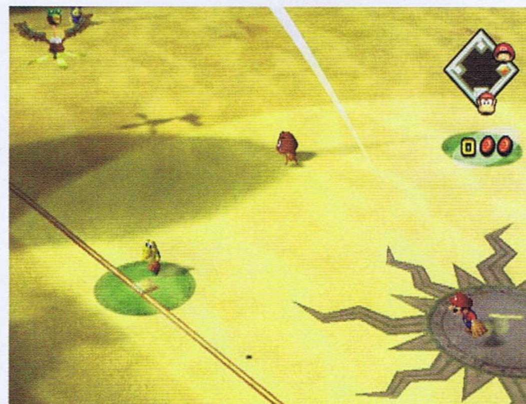
But if it wasn't hard enough to hit the bloody thing, half the time it goes flying through the air. That's fine if you've got DK or a Delfino Pianta on strike because if you time it well you could get a home run, but if you're Daisy it's a lot harder to reach the boundary without giving it one of your special powershots. Then, even if it looks like a fielder is nowhere near the ball, the pitch can make life hard.

As with all Mario sports games, the genius lies in the little details – the way

> **"AS WITH ALL MARIO SPORTS GAMES, THE GENIUS LIES IN THE LITTLE DETAILS"**



PERFECT PITCH
The pitching is spot on. Although many will have you believe that you just need to hurl the ball, you do need to be strategic. Look to see where the batter is standing and then swing the ball towards or away from him. Mix it up a bit and he'll be out of there.



△ The most annoying thing ever. You'll think you've smacked a home run, but the ball will drift behind the triangle and out.

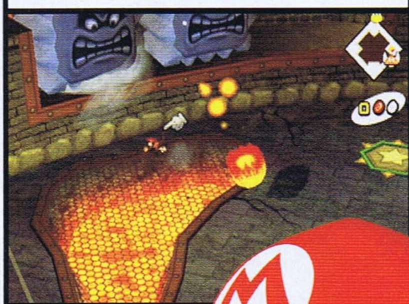
LIFE AIN'T PEACHY

On Peach's home turf, blocks appear in the sky. If the ball hits one of them, it will fall into the hands of a fielder waiting below.



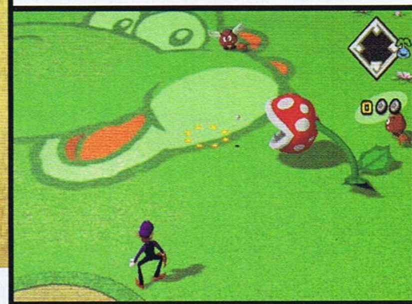
FLAMING HELL

The odds are stacked in favour of the batting side in Bowser's stadium as these fireballs attack the fielders. So here Mario's running for the ball when a fireball leaps out from the lava below and burns the plumber's posterior. He'll drop the ball, leaving the batter free to run for home.



THAT'S A PLANT

The Piranha plant can be great. It sometimes chomps up a ball heading straight for a fielder and vomits it somewhere else, giving you a chance to run for another base. But when it catches it and spits it straight into a fielder's arms… Grrrr.







△ The pitchers have special, er… chucks. Yoshi lobs his bum eggs.

it uses the Mushroom Kingdom's idiosyncratic scenery and marries it with proper, almost sim-like sports play to create a game that's silly, but never stupid.

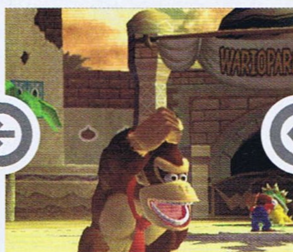
So, if you're playing in Wario's stadium, you can smash the ball nowhere near a fielder, yet the sandstorms from Shifting Sand Land can whip the ball up and chuck it back into someone's gloves. But as the pitch can hinder, it can just as easily help. So smash the ball into the far corner of the same stadium and you'll trot to the safety of first base while a fielder picks it up, but as soon as he grabs it, a Chain Chomp will smash into him, the ball will fly loose and if you're lucky, you could sprint around to third base. Brilliant.

HOME RUN!

You won't see this very often. To hit a home run, you need a great hitter (DK, a Delfino Pianta, or Bowser) and you need to hit it right on the money. But the fact that it's so rare means that it's something to cherish when you finally belt a shot into the stands. Even better when the bases are loaded.









Just look at Yoshi all happy. Doesn't that make you want to smash him in the face? The man (or in this case, dino) of the match wins a hero award.



Sorry ParaKoopa, but that's going straight to Daisy. Easy, easy…



Run into the circle and you'll catch the ball easily.




Fielding is tricky and you'll often mistime diving catches.

Moments like these happen on every pitch, but it's a shame that there are only five stadiums to play in Challenge mode, with the Mario Sunshines taking on Peach, Wario, Yoshi and Donkey Kong before finally unlocking Bowser's stadium. mistaken. Instead, all your unlocked players are removed from your team and you just have to play in the same stadiums again, only this time it's even harder. Sure, you'll unlock an extra minigame every time you beat Bowser, but these

> **"A TWO-PLAYER GAME IS A LAUGH AS ONE OF YOU WILL MISTIME A DIVING CATCH"**

Along the way you'll unlock loads of characters, so when you take on Bowser, you'll have big hitters like Donkey Kong, nippy fielders like Diddy and classy pitchers like Peach. But if you were expecting more stadiums once you'd defeated Bowser, you were

are mostly crap Mario Party-style games that have nothing to do with baseball.

Still, sports games are best played with friends, and seeing as the baseball is very good, multiplayer is great fun. Most will have trouble batting early on, but once that's sorted, anyone can play it. There's not much to understand other than smashing the ball as hard as you can, and when your mate has smashed it as hard as he can, try to catch it.

And seeing as your fielding won't be as incredible as the computer's, a two-player game is a laugh as one of you will mistime a diving catch or foolishly lob the ball to the wrong base.

Mario's done it again. From golf to tennis and now baseball, the plumber has proved that he's a better all round sportsman than Ian Botham (played football for Scunthorpe and test cricket). Next up is his biggest test of all as he plays football in *Super Mario Strikers*. Don't doubt him just yet…

TOM EAST



CALL THAT A BAT?

We've seen DK play golf with one arm, but here he doesn't even use a bat. He smacks the ball with a boxing glove. And he's not the only one who doesn't have a proper bat. Bowser has a huge club with spikes, but best (or worst) of all is Petey Piranha, who uses his leaves to hit the ball.



- Fairly strategic.
- Brilliant stadiums.
- Looks good.
- Great multiplayer.



- Hweeeah.
- Awful minigames.
- Challenge mode is too short.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Mario Power Tennis
Nintendo
NGC/104, 91%
The best Mario sports game yet. Again it's tough, but it's worth sticking with.



8 VISUALS
The characters are all here and the stadiums look great.

4 SOUNDS
Would be fine if not for that irritating hweeeah noise.

8 MASTERY
Tough, but fun. It's yet another good Mario sports game.

6 LIFESPAN
With only five stadiums, Challenge mode is limited.

VERDICT

The Challenge mode is a bit light, but the baseball is tough enough and there are plenty of classic Mario moments.

NGC 80

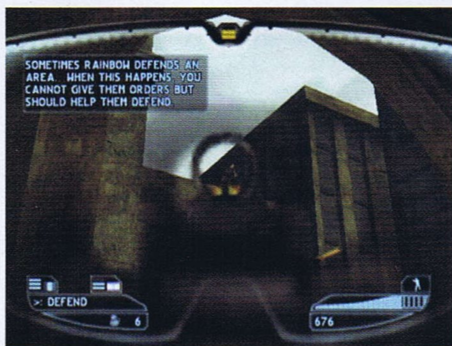








△ The ragdoll physics can be little bit OTT, but they're fun to watch all the same. Dance, monkey boy! Dance!



△ 'Surprise!' Enemies can take a while to react. Which can give you a massive advantage.



△ 'Sod it, let's rush him.' Another dumbass makes the ultimate futile sacrifice.

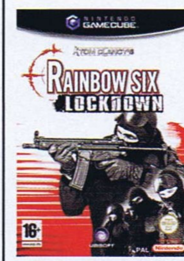


△ You can select weapons before the mission begins. But unfortunately, you can't pick them up off dead enemies.

RAINBOW 6 LOCKDOWN

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
DEVELOPER	UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE	9TH SEPT
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	51
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



Special forces remedial class.

You expect to meet idiots in some places. The Big Brother house, for instance. Most Wetherspoons pubs. The audience of any show hosted by Vernon Kaye. But in an elite squad of the world's special forces? Surely not.

Yet that's exactly what your unit are like in *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* – they're the sort of dunderheads you'd usually see chuckling at Homebase adverts or laughing at Jim Davidson. But when you usually come across an idiot, the worst they can to do is talk through an entire film. Here, they're supposed to be making sure you don't get shot in the head.

In the first mission, for example, you come to a courtyard and the cheerful on-screen hint tells you 'Sometimes, your team will defend. At this point you can no longer give them orders.' That's your team's cue to sprint out into the open and take cover behind a nearby van, completely ignoring the half-dozen snipers scattered across the rooftops.

'Help us, Chavez!' they bleat, already leaking onto the tarmac. But it's best to ignore them – it's easier to trample their corpses and do the rest of the mission yourself.

In other areas, we've seen the Rainbow team shoot at solid walls because there were enemies on the other side, refuse to run away from a grenade we inadvertently dropped and – always a favourite – run across our path of fire while we were shooting and then start moaning about friendly fire.

RAINBOW 6: LOCKDOWN

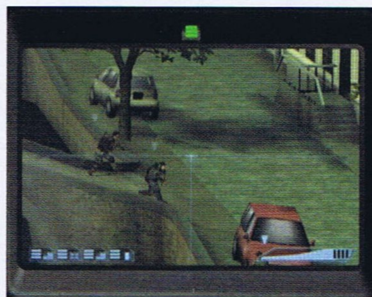
Really 'Special' soldiers



△ This may sound picky, but the flash grenades aren't quite blinding enough.



△ Enemies will frequently ignore the grenades you've just thrown at them.



△ The MP5's got one a hell of a kick, but it only fires in short bursts.



△ As a result of the 'realistic' style of gameplay, there are no health pick-ups in the entire game. So it's pretty handy that the enemy are entirely made up of complete idiots, then.



△ Luckily, Chavez typically brings enough ammo to kill everyone ten times over.



△ 'You're for it now, boyo! Isn't it?' Honestly, they're from the valleys.

KNOCK KNOCK

Every door presents a multitude of options. Do you shoot the lock, hammer it, or set a breach charge? And then should your team clear, frag, or flash-grenade the room? Well, it depends if you're going to find the president inside...

Fortunately – or keeping things fair, at least – the terrorists are just as forehead-slappingly stupid as your team. At range they're pretty tough, especially when they're dug in. They're also frighteningly accurate considering how easily you die.

However, these strangely Welsh-sounding terrorists aren't so worrying when you realise there's an easily exploitable flaw in the AI. If the terrorists are in a room, just poke your head around the door, then stand back and mow them down as they file towards you like the simpletons they are.

In one packed section, we managed to kill four people without even moving our gunsights. And when we moved into the room they were hiding in, we found another guy who honestly looked surprised to see us. Was he deaf, daft, or just hopelessly slow to react? Oh well, at least he didn't just run back and forth between two perfectly good bits of cover like the bloke in the next section.

HOLD IT...

Some of the best bits are the sniper sections, and cleverly, you can hold L to hold your breath, eliminating sight-shake. Although, when we tried holding our breath for as long as Chavez does, we went purple and couldn't fire elastic bands at Geraint with anything like our normal accuracy. That's why they're the elite, see.

draped over nearby shelving. We even like the fact that it's trying to be a pacy, simplified alternative to your typical plodding squad-based shooter. However, the cornerstone of team-based games is always the intelligence of both the enemies and your team. And the sad fact is, team Rainbow ought to be appearing in Chuckle Brothers sketches, not fighting the war on terror. Still, they'd be great on Big Brother.

> **"THE SORT OF DUNDERHEADS YOU USUALLY SEE CHUCKLING AT HOMEBASE ADVERTS"**

The sad thing is, without all these issues, *Lockdown* could potentially be quite good. We like the fact you can tell your boys to knock doors down with a hammer. We like the fact that you can shoot enemies so viciously they end up

JOEL SNAPE



- You get to slide down ladders.
- Great sniper rifle.
- Nice ragdoll physics.



- Your team are very, very stupid.
- The enemies are even more stupid.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Conflict Desert Storm 2
SCI
NGC/86 90%
Exactly how a squad-based shooter should be.



5 VISUALS

Boring, generic corridors and endless open-plan offices.

5 SOUNDS

'Help us, Chavez!' Maybe if you weren't so irritating, pal.

4 MASTERY

Even paint-ballers make Rainbow team look like amateurs.

6 LIFESPAN

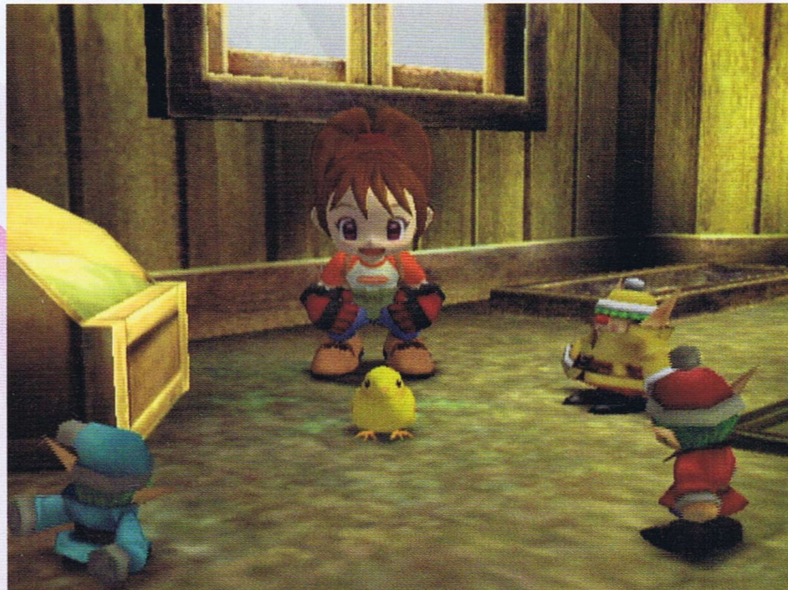
16 levels of might-as-well-do-it-alone duck-shoot.

VERDICT

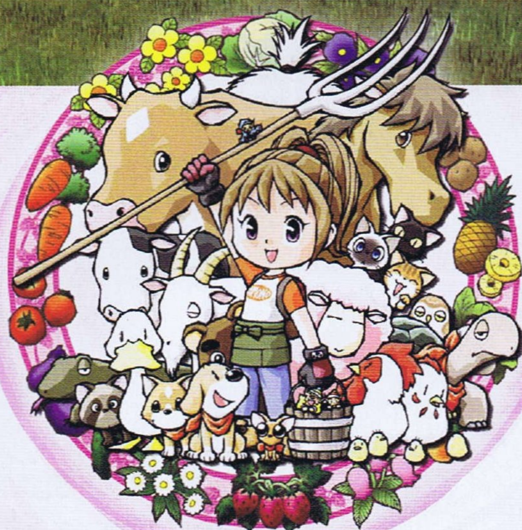
There's no point in a squad-based shooter if your squad are a bunch of simpering idiots. This needs sorting out.

NGC 44





△ If one of your chickens lays an egg, you can sell it on or hatch it to gain even more eggs.





△ Autumn is the prettiest season in the game.



△ The horse – *Harvest Moon*'s own taxi.

HARVEST MOON ANOTHER WONDERFUL LIFE

Apparently once around this mortal coil just isn't enough for some people…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NATSUME
DEVELOPER	MARVELOUS
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	28
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	$30 (£17)





△ Not much to do here. A common sight.





△ Girl on horse, yesterday…



Another Wonderful Life? Looks like an extra letter has sneaked in there: Another Wonderful Lie would be nearer the truth. Despite a name that makes you think this is a fully-fledged sequel, *Another Wonderful Life* was released in Japan under the slightly more accurate title, *A Wonderful Life For Girls*. This is a re-release of the intoxicatingly chilled-out farming sim, and it puts you in exactly the same village, on exactly the same farm, and gives you exactly the same day-to-day challenges. The difference is, this time you're a lady.

Rather than having to attract a missus to do the washing, cleaning and baby-making, you now have to husband-hunt. Forget-Me-Not Valley doesn't have the world's greatest stock of young studs, but choosing between the three bachelors on offer is to fit in around the watering, harvesting and milking that make up your daily life.

To be fair, there have been some other minor changes. Teensy details like the price of fertiliser have changed, and it's a little shorter, with each chapter of your life – from your arrival as a newbie farmer, to the birth of your children and your old-age as a dairy-produce tycoon – only lasting one game year. This aspect remains as charming as it was in the original. Watching your farm grow from two wilting tomato plants to a busy

BAND OF BOYS
The ins and outs of your love life.


Rock is the easiest bachelor to win over. He's a smart-talking, spoilt-rotten surfer-kid who is pretty much allergic to hard work. And about five years-old, apparently. Hardly ideal marriage material.


Mustafa is the ageing hippy who lives on the edge of town. To win him over, you'll need to woo him with gifts of flowers and gallons of free milk. Frighteningly, he's probably your best prospect.


Marlin works at the seed farm, and is the hardest hunk of the lot to impress. Then again, he's also an ex-alcoholic with a mysterious disease, so you may not want to try too hard.


Whoever you choose, you have to marry them at the end of the first year. Your baby arrives almost immediately, and you can shape his future career by buying him certain toys from the shop.



△ Flowers sprout all over town, all year round.


△ 'Big Issue?'


△ How romantic...


△ Mustafa is your worst-dressed suitor. Avoid.


△ This is the local archaeologist. He's not really 50 feet tall and 10 feet wide.



△ Your crops will need watering twice a day to produce these radioactively-healthy toms.



△ Love your dog and he'll learn some offensively basic tricks.

business decked out with banana plantations and a herd of happy star cows is well worth the hard graft of keeping everything fed and watered.

The village – and most of the villagers – may be identical to the first game, but watching their lives change as they grow older is still amazingly satisfying. And although the graphics are now beginning to date (it's nearly two years since the original Japanese release) there's still a sense of a beautiful world that changes from dawn to dusk, and winter to summer.

It's also surprising how much of a difference being a farmeress makes. There's no question it feels a little unfair and having to break your back in the fields all day and then coming home to try and make a decent soup out of a slimy mushroom and a peach seed is a little harder to stomach when your husband is off day-dreaming in the sunshine. There are compensations as you can buy a small stock of new outfits to wear, and there's a mirror to get updates on whether or not you've got a spot coming on – doesn't make up for your husband slacking off, though.

What's also harsh is that the developers haven't taken the time to fix some of the niggling problems that let down the first game. The first year still drags a little, and things like selling goods to the local shopkeeper are still annoyingly clumsy.

But all in all, there's no doubt *Another Wonderful Life* is a magical experience. The problem is that it's the *same* magical experience – one that you've maybe spent nearly 100 hours with. Farming may be about doing the same thing year after year, but gaming shouldn't be.

MARGARET ROBERTSON



TWITCHING CURTAINS

One of the real pleasures of the game is finding out more about the villagers' secret lives. It's worth taking strolls at midnight and following their daily routines to trigger little cutscenes which reveal snippets of their stories. As the years go by they age, and some eventually die. Sniff.

> **"FORGET-ME-NOT VALLEY DOESN'T HAVE THE GREATEST STOCK OF YOUNG STUDS"**



- Fancy new clothes.
- The farming is slightly easier.
- It's still gorgeous.



- It's the same thing all over again.
- Original game's flaws not fixed.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Animal Crossing
Nintendo
NGC/98 90%
Live a wonderful second life in a barmy town populated by animals.



8 VISUALS
It's showing its age, but the shadows and sunsets still impress.

5 SOUNDS
Only limited tunes, and you'll tire of them quick enough.

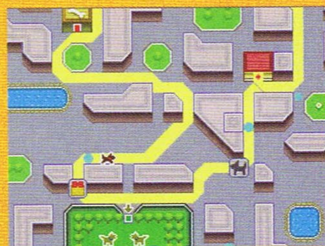
6 MASTERY
It's still a great game, but unfortunately it's just a lazy update.

9 LIFESPAN
If you're new to the game, this will last you for months.

VERDICT
It's still an entrancing and relaxing game, but it should really be called Harvest Moon: It's The Same Wonderful Life.

NGC 80

SHOW ME THE PUPPIES

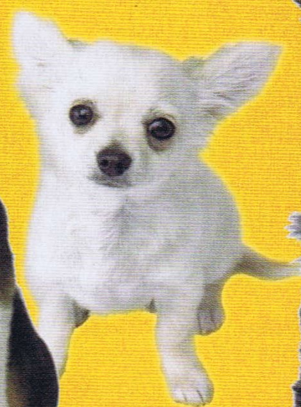




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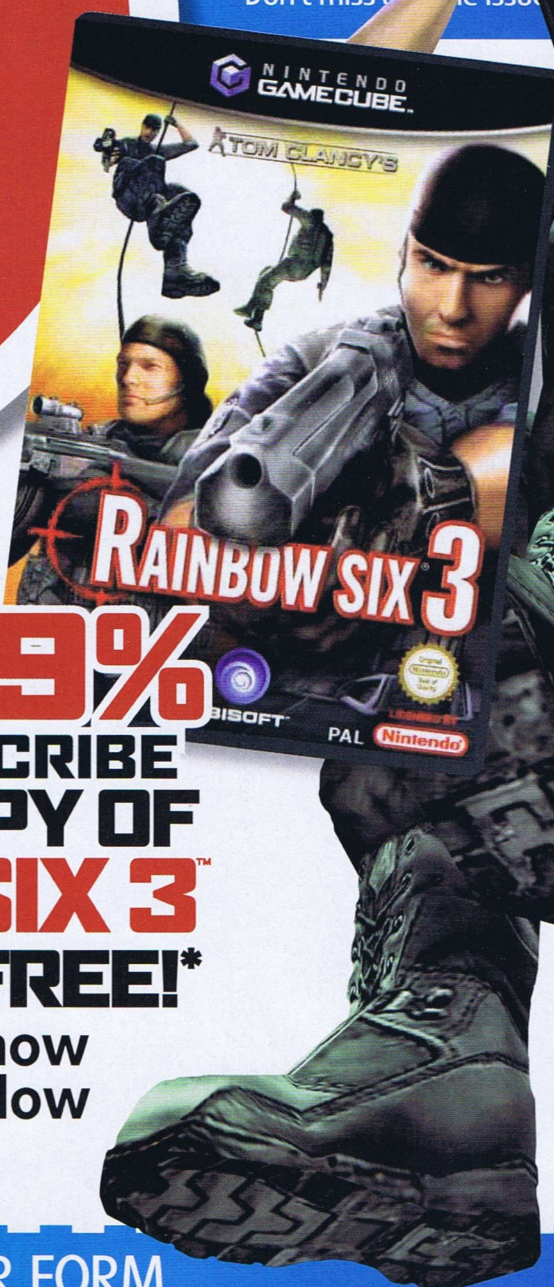
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NGC TOP 20 HARDEST MOMENTS

Forged from solid granite in the fires of hell itself…

If you're among the gaming elite – if you laugh in the face of death, have the hand/eye coordination of a brain surgeon, and possess the frustration threshold of a school careers advisor – then you've got some work to do. After three weeks of intense research, we have determined with science that these are the toughest games in Nintendo's catalogue from past to present. This list contains some of the most hair-tearingly difficult games ever conceived. If you can beat all of them, then you never have to prove anything ever again. Unless it's to prove you've been outside recently.

20 ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS (SNES, 1993)

An adventure through 48 levels of B-movie madness – the tough part comes from its notoriously bizarre password system. If you use it, you can start from wherever you got to in the game, but all your weapons will have disappeared and you'll only be armed with the bare essentials – completely unprepared for the trials you have to face. If you want to beat *Zombies*, you need to do so in one marathon five hour session.

THE GAUNTLET

There's a special place in hell for the people who designed *ZAMN*'s monsters, like the axe-throwing dolls, the blobs, or the near-unstoppable chainsaw maniacs. You'll be hard-pressed in levels where they're the only enemies, but as you progress you'll have to fight groups of them. It's the kind of fun that makes you wonder if there's something wrong with you.



19 BLAST CORPS (N64, 1997)

Destroying large buildings with large machines is, on the face of it, simple, primal fun. Yet, as you progress, the time limits get even shorter, the buildings get even bigger, and *Blast Corps* starts to earn its position on this list.



THE GAUNTLET

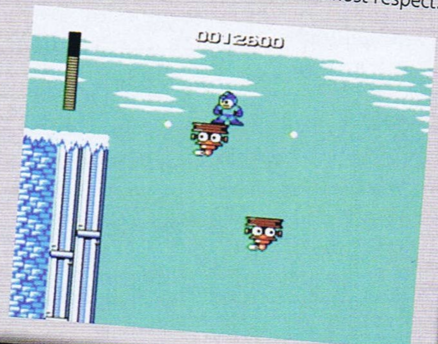
'Take this ridiculous vehicle and destroy a city block in about a second and a half. Okay? Go!' Sounds like an exaggeration until you reached to the Diamond Sands level, which had you to-ing and fro-ing through an underground passage to take down buildings over an impassable railway. If you can spell 'intensely' and 'frustrating' backwards, while belching, you're halfway there.

18 MEGA MAN (NES, 1986)

You could say a lot about the game that started the Blue Bomber's videogame empire, but we wouldn't blame you if there were a few profanities mixed in with the praise. Later games in the series range from slightly tricky to unthinkably easy, but the original *Mega Man* contained some of the greatest challenges of its console generation.

THE GAUNTLET

Iceman's stage separated the wheat from the chaff. If the disappearing platforms didn't get you, then the floating robots would. Later stages would provide harsher trials, such as the 'bastard' Rock Monster, but many would never get any further than this. If you can beat *Mega Man* without using the infamous pause glitch, you have our utmost respect.



17 HUNTER THE RECKONING (GAMECUBE, 2002)



There was a short-lived period when some decried modern video games as being 'too easy'. The same people suggested that all a truly talented player had to do was show up. *Hunter: The Reckoning*, one of the best descendants of four-player slash-'em-ups like *Gauntlet*, ended the debate. With four players, *Hunter* requires pinpoint reflexes and a solid grasp of tactics, with one player, you'll need nerves of steel and divine intervention to succeed.

THE GAUNTLET

You begin the game outnumbered, facing down dozens of zombies in the streets of Ashcroft. By the time you run into the explosive war ghouls, the zombies seem almost cuddly, and when you encounter the enormous globular fiend that serves as a boss for the first level, the zombies become downright attractive. Every successive boss and level in *Hunter* continues to raise the already high stakes. By the time you reach the inner courtyard of the prison, you'll be burning lives like mad.

16 NINJA GAIDEN (NES, 1989)

The later Gaiden games were much easier, leaving the first *Ninja Gaiden* to represent the trilogy on this list. The first two and a half levels let you get used to the fast-paced action, but once you hit Level 3-3, those sodding hawks appear, and all bets are off.

THE GAUNTLET

The final stage, where four hits are enough to kill you, is one of the fiercest platforming challenges on the NES. That's quite a boast, but with everything that walks, crawls, flies or shoots allied against you as you battle across the teetering walls of a crumbling castle, it's the simple truth. The jump and slash power-up may get you through intact, but you'll need to save your strength for the final showdown with your nemesis, Jacquio.



15 ACTRAISER 2 (SNES, 1993)

For Enix's second go at *Actraiser*, they ditched much of the meat of the previous game. In its place was an action-packed side-scroller that enhanced and reworked the original's battle sequences. Those were hard, particularly if you hadn't been abusing your worshippers to up your power level; *Actraiser 2*'s battles are more so.



THE GAUNTLET

The Death Field is a killing zone. Seemingly harmless background features can drop you in seconds, and the enemies will swarm you like locusts. Most of *Actraiser 2*'s levels can be lethal more or less at will, but the Death Field seems to want to kill you just for standing in it.

14 FORSAKEN 64 (N64, 1998)

Iguana Studios provided the N64 with some of its better third-party titles – with *Forsaken 64* being but one example. Try to imagine a third-person shooter with the difficulty turned up to 11, where you could go up, down, around, or through with full 360° motion. That's *Forsaken 64*.



THE GAUNTLET

Like a couple of other games on this list, the trick to *Forsaken* isn't really the challenge factor (which, at its worst, is a white-knuckle test of your staying power). The real challenge is adjusting your thinking to the freedom of the environment. That and resigning yourself to the fact that incoming fire doesn't just come from the front and back. It comes from everywhere. All the time.

13 SUPER SMASH TV (SNES, 1991)

One of the most demanding shooters of the 16-bit generation, which is saying something in an era that included games like *Axelay* and *Gradius III*. *Super Smash TV* is a remarkably faithful port of the arcade penny-muncher, and brought all of its formidable challenges with it to home consoles.

THE GAUNTLET

From the moment you hit press the Start button, *Super Smash TV* brings the pain. The mobs of club-wielding enemies are bad enough, but they're soon joined by landmines, the kamikaze Mr. Shrapnel, mounted turrets, laser orbs and lethal snakes. Nobody who has played *SSTV* will forget Mutoid Man, the maniacally laughing game show host – 'Good luck! You'lllllll need it!'



12 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (NES, 1989)



Thanks to Konami's arcade division, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles would go on from here to enjoy a long and fruitful career as the stars of four-player beat-'em-ups. Their game history starts here, though, with this monster-packed side-scroller. Playing the original *TMNT* is like being pecked to death by a murder of crows; no matter how many little robots or midget ninjas you swat, they just keep coming.

THE GAUNTLET

The entire game is notoriously unforgiving, due to its odd way of dealing with lives. If your current character runs out of health, he's captured, and you'll only have two or three opportunities throughout the game to rescue anyone who's being held captive. With that said, the electronic underwater mazes in the second level are probably the toughest challenges you'll face until you reach the final stage in the Technodrome.

11 SIN AND PUNISHMENT

(N64, 2000)



Treasure's first appearance on this list never made it out of Japan. It's worth tracking down a copy of the Japanese cart, though, as this is a must-play shooter. Taking gameplay cues from old-school games like *Space Harrier*, you have to blast away armies of incoming aliens while rushing headlong into them, juggling offence and defence simultaneously.

THE GAUNTLET

Things get rapidly harder once you hit the city, as aliens bear down on you in ever greater numbers. Like *Ikaruga*, *Sin and Punishment* requires you to cleave your brain in two and master entirely separate reflexes in order to survive. Foreground and background, movement and aiming, auto or manual fire – and that's before you've even thought of using the sword to deflect rockets.

10 THE 7TH SAGA (SNES, 1993)

This Enix RPG has become a bit obscure in the years since its release. As one of seven highly trained adventurers – a human warrior, elven mage, dwarven fighter, tetsujin robot, fire-tossing alien, mystically-powered demon, or human healer – your goal is to search for seven special runes. Unfortunately for you, the world in which you'll find them is one of the most lethal in RPG history.

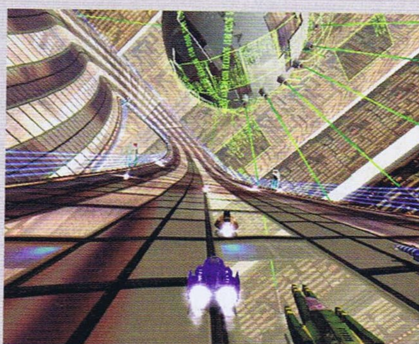
THE GAUNTLET

The 7th Saga was infamous in the way it bucked the trend in RPG design. Other RPGs allowed you to progress as quickly as you liked, earning just enough experience as you went to remain competitive. The game itself is a throwback to the NES days, and requires you to level-up your character whenever you reach a new city. But even if you do, there are certain circumstances – journeying to a new continent, for example – where it hits you with random overworld encounters of such insane difficulty, they obliterate you before you know what's hit you.



09 F-ZERO GX (GAMECUBE, 2003)

One of the most technically impressive games of the current generation, *F-Zero GX* serves up a pure arcade racer of such blistering speed we don't know anyone who can play without unconsciously clenching their buttocks for an entire Grand Prix. With 30 racers in a pack and some seriously unforgiving courses, it's a brutal challenge that few have ever fully completed.

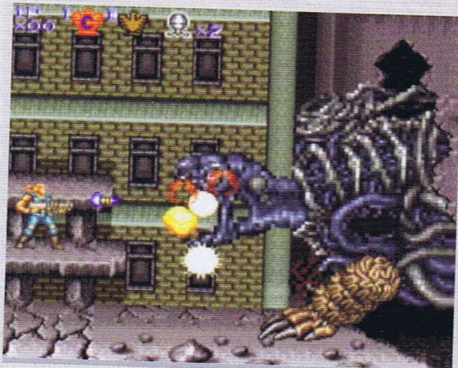


THE GAUNTLET

Unlocking and finishing all the cups on the Master setting is a feat in itself. However, it's the secondary modes that separate the men from the boys. On the Hardest difficulty setting, every single one of Story mode's individual challenges is only possible through a Zen-like connection between man and machine. And if you can pull that off, there are always the staff ghosts in Time Trial to deal with…

08 CONTRA III THE ALIEN WARS

(SNES, 1992)



One of the Contra games was bound to make it onto this list, with the series training a generation of hard-bitten arcade-rats – although *Contra III* upped the already considerable stakes. If you're careful about it, you can keep weapons after your death, but even that and your screen-clearing bomb aren't enough of an edge against this relentless slice of shooter madness.

THE GAUNTLET

It's a Contra game. If getting shot at from every conceivable angle (even angles which haven't been invented yet) isn't enough, you're also getting deluged with lava, mauled by monsters, or falling into bottomless pits. It's a bit like skipping, only the girls flanking you are holding AK-47s instead of rope.

07 CASTLEVANIA III DRACULA'S CURSE (NES, 1990)

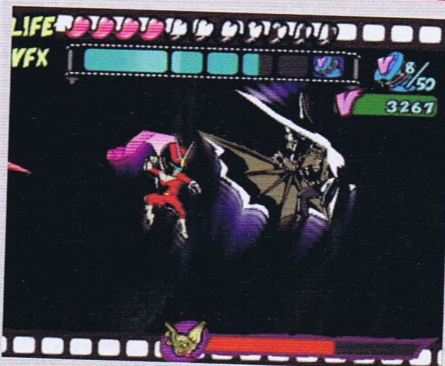
The original was difficult, but a strategy involving the abuse of triple-shot holy water could get you through 90% of the game unscathed. But this isn't the case with *Castlevania III*, with its multiple paths, fragile but indispensable spiritual helpers, and a host of bosses leading to Dracula himself.

THE GAUNTLET

Castlevania III contains something of a catch-22. The easiest path to Dracula requires you to adopt the frail spell-caster Sypha as a spirit ally. But her powerful spells are scant compensation for her lack of stamina… Until you reach the fearsome aqueduct stage, which her otherwise useless ice spell turns into a walk in the park.



06 VIEWTIFUL JOE (GAMECUBE, 2003)

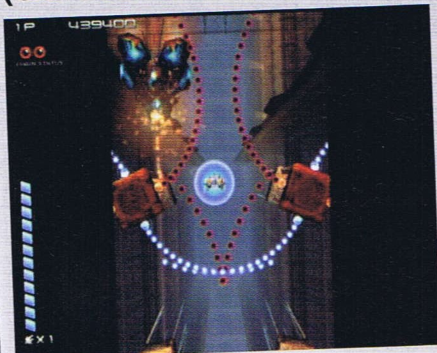


Henshin a-go go, baby! Capcom's ode to Japanese pop culture and 2D brawlers is spectacular. It's also controller-throwingly hard, particularly if you're playing on Adult mode as nature intended. Apparently, 'henshin' is an obscure Japanese verb, meaning 'to break people through frustration'.

THE GAUNTLET

An informal poll of hardcore *Viewtiful Joe* players pointed to a few specific moments, like bouncing the helicopter's bullets back at it, but one fight kept coming up more than any other – the battle against Fire Leo. Leo's most annoying tactic is to go absolutely ballistic, making him both hard to hit and hard to avoid.

05 IKARUGA (GAMECUBE, 2003)



Ikaruga is 'just' a bullet-hell shooter in the same way a meteor shower is 'just' light summer rain. Just when you get used to the central idea – that depending on your ship's colour, you should fly towards incoming blaster fire – the game steps up a gear, turning several stages into something like an aerial death-puzzler.

THE GAUNTLET
Ikaruga really kicks in when you reach the third stage. The second level's destructible mazes are replaced by a constantly shifting system of invincible blocks, many of which emit massive blasts that can shove you into the wall. If you survive that, you'll wind up in a high-speed dogfight with countless enemy ships, made all the harder by pylons emerging from the walls.

04 THE IMMORTAL (NES, 1990)

The Immortal has slid into obscurity in the years since its release, and deservedly so. You're a wizard plumbing the depths of a monster-strewn dungeon in search of your missing master. However, this game doesn't screw around; if you mess up, you die. Any given room is strewn with half a dozen killers, from man-eating worms to bloodthirsty goblins, and any one of them can take you out at a moment's notice. It's a nightmare.



THE GAUNTLET
If you can master the intricacies of sword fighting with goblins and dodging the more mundane traps, you've still got to deal with the horrifying, water-filled corridors of the seventh stage. Between the water's currents, the whirlpools, and the aquatic monster that's chasing you, you'll have your hands full.

03 SUPER MARIO BROS THE LOST LEVELS (SNES, 1993)

The version of *Super Mario Bros 2* you know and love was originally called *Doki Doki Panic*, and had nothing to do with Mario, Luigi, Toad, or Princess Toadstool. In Japan, *Super Mario Bros 2* was much like the original: a turtle-stomping, shell-tossing platformer. However, *SMB2* was thought to be too difficult for westerners, and as such, it was only released years later as *The Lost Levels*, part of the *Super Mario All-Stars* combo cart. They may very well have been right. *The Lost Levels* is about as hardcore as it gets.



THE GAUNTLET:
The. Whole. Damn. Game. Honestly. After trying for ten years we can't even get past the second world.

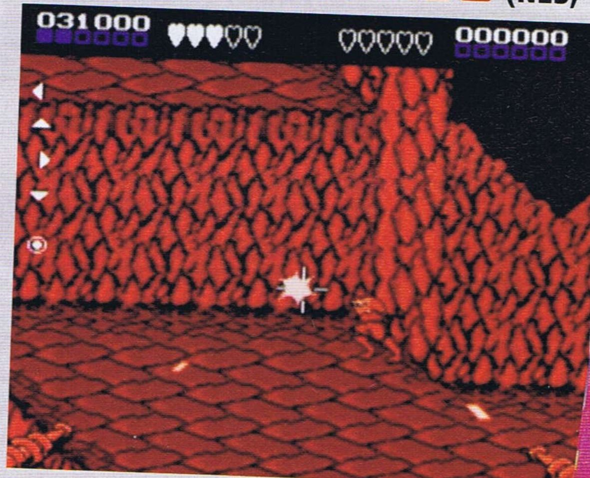
02 SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS (SNES, 1991)

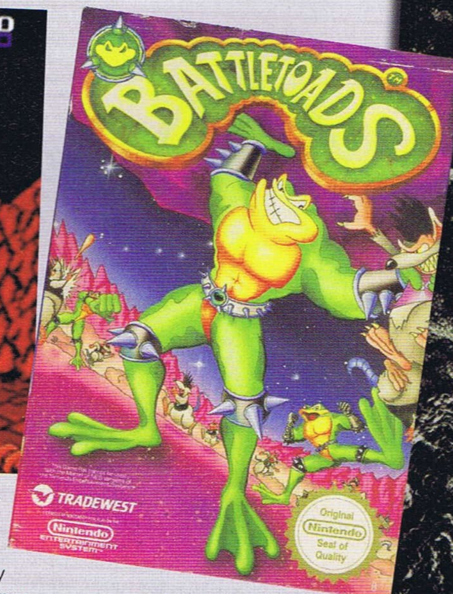


The Ghouls 'n' Ghosts series was infamous from the moment it was released. It's so hard that very few people have ever beaten it – hell, some people can't even manage the first level – mainly because it employs some of the most archaic conventions of old-school classics. Like rigid controls – particularly Arthur's jumping arc, which can't be adjusted mid-flight – and enemy placement that is simply cruel in its 'why did they put him there?' inconvenience.

THE GAUNTLET
Treacherous pathways full of constantly spawning zombies, fiery skulls, hellhounds and a tidal wave that washes down, leaving you to fall into holes that weren't there a second ago. And that's just the first level. Even if you master its more mundane challenges, it will still kill you for the sin of not being clairvoyant. And if that isn't bad enough, imagine the horror of reaching the final boss, only to be told you have to play it all over again before it lets you so much as sniff the end sequence.

01 BATTLETOADS (NES, 1991)





One of the most ambitious games of its day, *Battletoads* was a blatant attempt to cash in on the tidal wave of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle mania that swept the country in the late '80s. The game is rich with personality, multiple challenges, memorable characters and a challenge rating that's made it the most notorious game on any system. When you mention *Battletoads*, people actually scream.

THE GAUNTLET
The third stage's manic, hell-for-leather sled race, where your toads have a split-second to veer out of the way of granite plinths before they suddenly appear on-screen, has achieved the status of gaming legend. Only the best of the best can pass this stage, and that's not even mentioning the countless and bizarre levels that follow. *Battletoads*' relentless sense of innovation just overpowers its insane difficulty, making it fun enough to qualify for the top spot on this list. If you're looking to test your skills against the ultimate challenge, look no further.

NGC TELLS YOU HOW TO...

Take out your rage on an entire city, destroy buildings and save the day in...

THE INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

NGC GUARANTEE 100% PRO-TESTED GUIDE

Take on the super-villains and win. Don't worry about the collateral damage...



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

You are given complete control of The Incredible Hulk. The action takes place in a large free-roaming city, and virtually everything can be smashed, chucked or destroyed. Even the buildings themselves.



WHAT WE SAID LAST ISSUE!

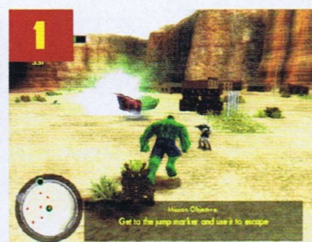
The Incredible Hulk is given licence to run around a city, smashing anything he can get his hands on. The result is an entertainingly destructive romp, although it is slightly marred by design flaws.

NGC 79

CHAPTER 0-1 IN THE BEGINNING

Defeat the soldiers immediately in front of you, move through the canyon, then defeat the tank and helicopters. Waste the soldiers and battle through the small town to the jump marker. This is more of a tutorial mission than anything else, so take as much time as you like to perfect Hulk's attacks.

1



△ You can defeat the first batch of soldiers with basic punches.

2



△ The helicopters are tougher. Throw rocks at them to bring them down.

3



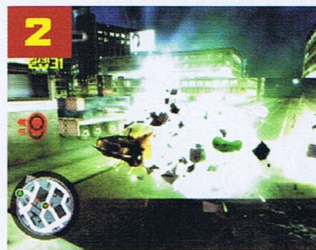
△ You'll need to charge up your punches to beat the tank.

CHAPTER 1-1 POLICE BRUTALITY

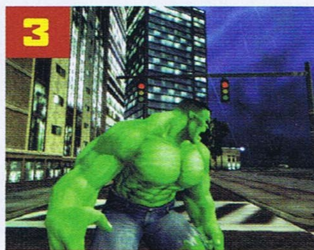
Activate the jump marker near the church to enter the city. When you arrive, the police will be on your tail. To proceed, eliminate every officer and squad car in the area. Pick up a civilian vehicle and press Y to activate Hulk's Steel Fists move – this will make the mission a lot easier.



△ The police will arrive in squad cars directly below the hotel.



△ The best way to defeat the police cars is to lock on and use Air Strike.



△ Completely clear the area of cops to move on to the next mission.

CHAPTER 1-2 LIGHTNING STRIKE

There are three power generators dotted around the city. To proceed, you have to destroy them and cut the power to the Division buildings. Simply follow the red markers on your map and Air Strike the substations. The choppers defending them respawn, so just ignore them.



△ You don't have to destroy the generators in any particular order.



△ Approach the generator from behind to avoid the army's fire.



△ Charge jump and throw big objects at the generators.



△ Charge jump and rush down with an Air Cannonball to destroy it.

CHAPTER 1-3 NEED TO KNOW

Make your way to the Division Headquarters. Break through the tanks at the entrance and run up the side of the building. When you reach the roof, smash the crates until you reveal the computer unit. Destroy the helicopters, grab the unit and chain jump back to the hotel. Then just drop the unit in the marker. Job done.



△ Smash the crates to find the unit, then destroy the helicopters and cars.



△ Chain jump back to the church with the unit as fast as you possibly can.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

The five moves you should buy at the earliest opportunity.

1. HAMMERTOSS
Tap X in front of a tank and Hulk will grab it by the barrel. Rotate the C-stick to swing it, lock on to a target and release to cause massive damage.

2. AIR CANNONBALL
Leap into the air and hold down the A button to charge. The Hulk will crouch into a ball and hurl himself at the enemy. Good for slow-moving ground units, specifically tanks.

3. CRITICAL THUNDERCLAP
You'll be using this one a lot. While in critical mass, hold the A button and special to unleash a huge wave of energy that destroys anything and everything in your immediate vicinity.

4. HITCHHIKE
While in the air next to a large enemy, press and hold X to latch on to a part of their body, then batter the A button. You can use this to target specific areas on the larger mechs.

5. AIR DASH LEVEL 1/2
While jumping, press R to surge forward. This enables you to cover greater distances and, most importantly, change direction while chain jumping.





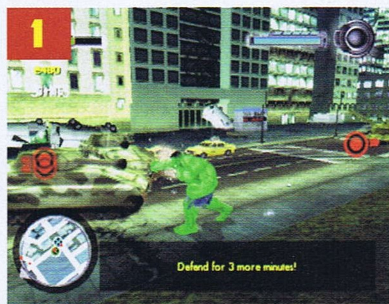






CHAPTER 1-4 PROTECT AND SERVE

As soon as the mission begins, swarms of tanks will head for the research centre, and your task is to prevent it from being destroyed. Stay at the base of the centre and whenever a tank gets near, use Steel Fists to destroy it. Keep on top of them for four minutes to complete the mission.



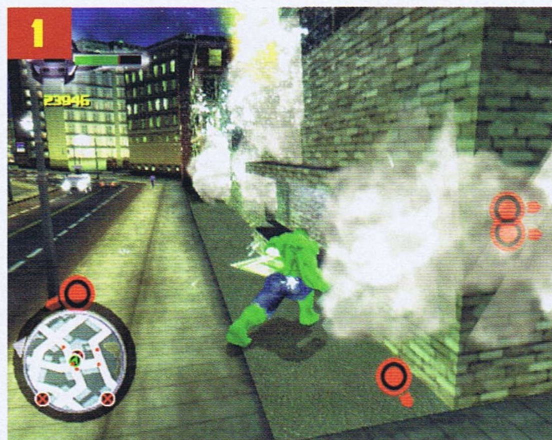
△ Don't let the tanks reach the research centre.



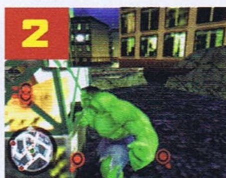
△ Five hits and the centre will be destroyed.

CHAPTER 1-5 FIRE SALE

Go to the warehouse, destroy it, then pick up the lifter and take it to the church. Next, destroy the crates, pick up the scan imager and take it to the church. Finally, chuck stuff at the forcefield generator to destroy it and retrieve the power generator.



△ Punch the side of the warehouse until it collapses.



△ The scan imager is hidden in a random crate.



△ Clear the area of rocket troops immediately.



△ Return the objects to the church intact.

BOSS BATTLE ABOMINATION

CHAPTER 1-6: NEMESIS

To defeat the Abomination you have to make the walls collapse on him. The best way to do this is to stand on top of the white gas canisters – he'll punch them to get at you and end up crushing himself with the rubble. But jump away quickly, because you can get trapped yourself.



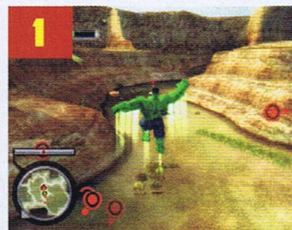
△ Throw objects at him to wear him down.



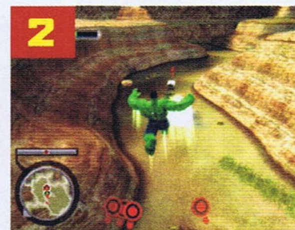
△ It takes four collapses to defeat him.

CHAPTER 2-1 GET YOURSELF A CONVOY

In this mission, three convoys of trucks will make their way through the Badlands. You have to intercept each one before they reach their destination. Ignore their defences, lock on and Chain Jump after them. Air Strike them, then finish them off with punches.



△ Convoy A departs directly in front of your starting point.



△ Convoy B makes its way through the canyon to the east.



△ Time is short, so go straight for the trucks themselves.

CHAPTER 2-2 HEADHUNTER

Move southeast towards the military base. Destroy any Hulkbuster mech units you come across and head towards the HB prototype in the crater at the far end of the base. Destroy it and pick up the Neural Interface Module. Chain Jump to the nearest jump marker and deliver it to the church.



△ There are loads of mechs to be destroyed in the base.



△ Rip the neural interface module from the Hulkbuster prototype.



△ Fend off the mechs, steal the module and go to the jump marker.



△ The module is very easily damaged, so be careful.

BOSS BATTLE HULKBUSTER

CHAPTER 2-3: PROVING GROUNDS

Destroy the three satellite uplinks to prevent the Hulkbuster from calling in back-up. When the smaller mechs have been dealt with, throw stuff at the Hulkbuster and attack it with Critical Thunderclaps and Air Strikes. It will take a while, but keep cracking away.



1 △ Throw rocks at the front of the mech just after it attacks you.



2 △ Use plenty of fully-charged Mad combos to defeat it.

CHAPTER 3-1 AUTHORITY ISSUES

Make your way across the city, destroying the mech units and army choppers. When all of the enemies have been destroyed, the Chief Combat Warden will show himself. Use Critical Thunderclaps to defeat him. When he's gone, pick up the memory module and escape to the church.



1 △ Use the Steel Fists weaponization move to destroy the tanks.



2 △ Thunderclaps and Air Strikes are the most effective attack.

CHAPTER 3-2 FRANTIC RECOVERY

Chain Jump and Air Dash towards the yellow marker. When you get there, the truck will start to drive away very quickly. Get in front of it, do a Critical Thunderclap and it will take heavy damage. Repeat this until it's disabled. Carry the remains back to the church and drop it in the marker.



△ If you don't make it to the truck in time you will fail.

IMPORTANT SKILLS

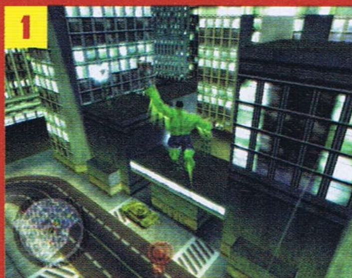
Four skills you should devote your time to perfecting.

1. CHAIN JUMPING
This is absolutely essential. Jump, charge up, then hit jump again just as you land and you'll continue to gain speed and height. Master this to cover great distances very quickly.

2. LOCK ON
This is very helpful, so take advantage of it. Keep switching targets with the C-stick and you can leap about while keeping your eye on your target.

3. WEAPONIZATION
It's easy to forget about this during a chaotic battle, but missile packs, cars, buses and other things can be turned into useful weapons. Just hit the Y button to activate them.

4. SIDE MISSIONS
Make sure you do the side missions as they are useful for earning Smash Points, which you can use to buy new moves and skills. They're a bit rubbish, but are very useful if you're after an expensive move like the Gamma Bomb.



1



2



3



4

BOSS BATTLE MERCY

CHAPTER 3-3: MERCY

Mercy can only be damaged by throwing objects at her or by striking just after she's finished a big attack. Don't get too close as her attacks can be deadly – instead, keep your distance, keep moving and time your strikes. Critical Thunderclaps will help massively here.



△ When her powers are gone, deliver a final punch to win the battle.

CHAPTER 4-1 CLEAN SWEEP

There are three heavily guarded gas pods strewn across the city. You have to break through these defences, fend off the HB mechs and toss them into the ocean. The final pod is protected by two large Hulkbuster mechs, so deal with them before picking it up.



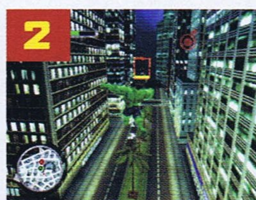
△ Latch on to the mechs' heads and punch them.

CHAPTER 4-2 A BIRD IN THE HAND

Catch up with the helicopter before the timer runs out. When you reach it, use Air Strikes, Air Dashes and physical attacks to bring it down. When it has been destroyed, collect the uranium container it was carrying and take it back to the church, avoiding the mechs and fighter jets.



△ You have about a minute to reach the chopper.



△ Fight off the mechs and collect the uranium.

CHAPTER 4-3 LOCKDOWN

Protect Samson's car at all costs. As he makes his way through the city, take care of roadblocks, tanks and helicopters before they reach him. If you keep on top of the enemy, Samson shouldn't take too much of a beating. Avoid critical moves as you may damage him by accident.



△ Stay away from Samson or you may damage him.

CHAPTER 4-4 MY OTHER VOICE

In this mission you have to destroy a series of Division buildings. Get in close, defeat the HB mechs and use Critical Thunderclaps to level the buildings around you. When the HB destroyers come, use Steel Fists and charged Air Strikes to get rid of them.



△ Destroy the biggest mechs before you begin.



△ The Intel building is pretty tough and takes quite a beating.



△ The last building is the well-defended armoury.

BOSS BATTLE TITAN

CHAPTER 4-5: TURNING POINT

You need to have purchased the Hammertoss move at the church before you begin this battle. When the Titan arrives and starts levelling the city, run up to tanks, press X and swing them at it. After about five or six direct hits with tanks it will catch fire and eventually blow up.



△ The Titan can block, so you have to strike just after it attacks.

CHAPTER 5-1 WITHOUT PAROLE

Smash through the vault, clearing it of enemies and destroying doors and barriers. When you reach the main chamber the Capture Warden will arrive. Defeat it by clinging on to its head and bashing it, throwing objects and performing Critical Thunderclaps. It will soon go down.



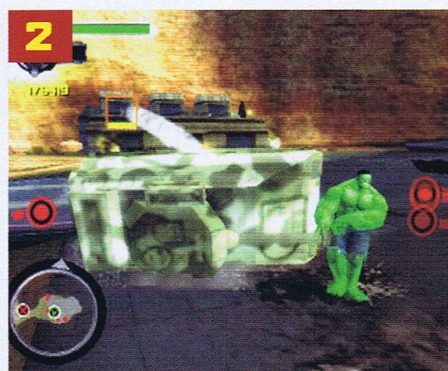
△ Ensure that you keep critical mass by collecting all the green orbs.

CHAPTER 5-2 TOPSIDE

Escape from the vault, through the badlands and to the jump marker. Whenever you come across a forcefield, throw objects at the generators on the other side to destroy them. The last few can be dealt with by performing Critical Thunderclaps. Clear away any enemies and escape to the church.



△ You need to destroy harrier jets and choppers to stay in critical mass



△ Hammertoss tanks at the forcefield generators.



△ The best way to destroy the last generator is to do a Thunderclap in the tunnel.

CHAPTER 6-1 STRANGE CARGO

There's a power module in the military base, but it's totally sealed off. You need to steal a cargo truck, press Y and disguise yourself to get in. When you get inside, remove the disguise, steal the module and Chain Jump as fast as you can back to the jump marker in the canyon.



△ Defeat the troops and steal a cargo truck from the depot.



△ Sneak through the roadblocks to get inside the army base.



△ Get rid of your disguise and steal the power module from the base.



△ Get rid of the Hulkbuster mechs and return to the jump marker.

CHAPTER 6-2 FREEDOM'S SWANSONG

Defend the church from wave after wave of enemies, including two Titans. Use every technique in the book to keep on top of the enemies. Hammertoss tanks at the Titans as soon as possible – if they reach the church they will tear it to pieces.



△ Run between the Titan's legs to get behind it, then attack it.



△ Wrestle the mechs by pressing the X button in mid-air.

BOSS BATTLE DEVIL HULK

CHAPTER 6-3: CROSSROADS

The best tactic here is to repeatedly use Air Cannonballs on Devil Hulk while he's out of the pit. Otherwise keep attacking the three embryos surrounding him. If your health is running low, Chain Jump around the arena, avoiding Devil Hulk, to recharge. Keep hitting him with Critical Thunderclaps and tap the A button if he catches you in his mouth.



△ Use charged cannonballs relentlessly.

CHAPTER 7-1 INTERCEPT

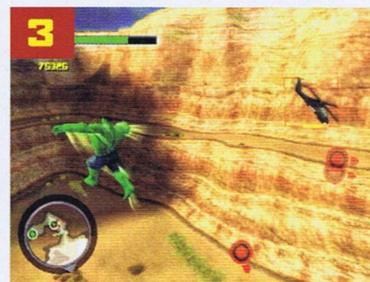
Chain jump to the vault (the facility you escaped from earlier), defeat the Combat Warden guarding the entrance and then go inside. As before, defeat the Warden with charged Air Cannonballs and throw objects and rocks at him.



△ Follow the green marker on the radar to find the Warden.



△ You will find the Combat Warden guarding the vault.



△ Air Cannonballs are the best way to get rid of those pesky helicopters.

BOSS BATTLE ABOMINATION

CHAPTER 7-2: ENDGAME

Defeat Abomination to stop him destroying the dam. The best technique is to use Air Cannonballs repeatedly. This, combined with the missiles from the harrier jets, will knock his health down rapidly. When he starts attacking the dam, draw him away with attacks.



△ Lock on and use charged air attacks to drain The Abomination's energy.



△ You can find some much needed health orbs around the edges of the dam.



NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS
PROBLEMS SOLVED
EVERYTHING
YOU NEED!

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING…

TIPS EXTRA



Ignore the melons, you'll have all the food you need with our *Madagascar* tips.

MADAGASCAR

ALL POWER-UPS
While playing, press X, A, A, X, Y, L, B, R, L.

THE BANQUET
Approach the Lemur on the drum at the banquet. Talk to him 10 times to get some extra food. This will only work twice.

EASY COINS
With Gloria in Level 3, hit 30 cars to get 15 coins. This will only work once.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

15000 SMASH POINT BONUS
Enter SMASH19 at the code input screen.

DOUBLE THE VALUE OF HEALTH PICK-UPS
Enter BRINGIT at the code input screen.

UNLOCK UNION JACK SHORTS SKIN
Enter FSHNCHP at the code input screen.

UNLOCK ABOMINATION SKIN
Complete the game.

UNLOCKABLE SMASH POINT LEVELS BRUCE BANNER
Enter TRY AGAIN at the code input screen.

SPILLER OF MILK
Enter MUTANDA at the code input screen.

PUNY MONKEY!
Enter SMASH5 at the code input screen.

YOU'RE NOT REALLY TRYING!
Enter OCANADA at the code input screen.

BIG, GREEN AND USELESS
Enter SMASH15 at the code input screen.

MERELY ANNOYING
Enter BANDERA at the code input screen.

HULK SMASH!
Enter DEUTSCH at the code input screen.

CIVIL DISASTER
Enter CABBIES at the code input screen.

SHEER CARNAGE!
Enter SMASH10 at the code input screen.

MASS DESTRUCTION
Enter FURAGGU at the code input screen.

CATASTROPHIC DESTRUCTION
Enter DRAPEAU at the code input screen.



Complete *MOH: EA* with ease.



Unlock *Killer 7's* new difficulty setting.

TOTAL DEVASTATION!
Enter AMERICA at the code input screen.

STRONGEST ONE THERE IS
Enter RETRO at the code input screen.

GOD
Enter HISTORY at the code input screen.

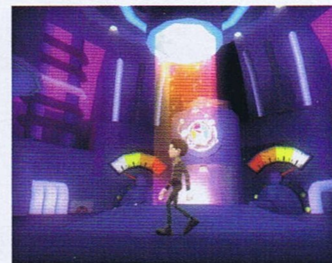
CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

UNLOCK ALL MINIGAMES
Collect all the letters spelling WONKA.

UNLOCK ALL PHOTO ALBUMS
Collect all 25 boxes on every level

KILLER 7

100 VIALS OF SERUM
At the Start screen, press Down, R, Up, L, Y, B, X, A. This will only work on Killer 8 mode. You will get 100 vials every time you start the first level.



Try out Willy Wonka's minigames.

MEDAL OF HONOR EUROPEAN ASSAULT

ACTIVATE CHEAT MODE
Pause, then hold L + R and press Up, Y, Y, B, Up, A. Then enter one of the following codes.

FILL ADRENALINE METER
Pause, then enter X, L, B, Z, L, Y.

INFINITE AMMO
Pause, then enter Z, R, Up, X, B, A.

INVINCIBILITY
Pause, then enter B, Y, Right, A, Z, R.



Adrenaline is now at your finger tips.



There's even more destructive fun to be had in *Ultimate Destruction*'s bonus levels.



READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. KILLER 7

Bloody Smiles

Go to Sunset Part 2 and head out of the trailer to the main level. Run forwards then turn left. A Smile will spawn. Kill it then walk forward to the next junction for another Smile. Turn left to get to the car, kill the Smile then turn left again. Keep repeating this circle to stock up on blood.
Henry Tsang, Sudbury

2. NFL STREET 2

Develop-mental

Play one of the Gold Metal challenges in NFL Challenge, but don't get gold. If you keep getting bronze and silver, you can keep replaying them and getting Development points.
Andy Waters, Stranraer

3. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Playing with fire

You can't be killed by fire alone, which makes the village clock tower an ideal sniping spot since the Molotov cocktails won't kill you.
Jonathon Trier-Brikner, Denmark

4. TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

A bridge too far

You can get onto the bridge on the LA level before the earthquake. Enter the liquor store, turn around when you're at the top of the building, then go left and jump onto the next building. From here you can ollie onto the bridge.
Gilles Reuse, Belgium

5. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Stay! Bad Salazar!

When you're fighting Salazar, instead of shooting his eye with a shotgun, place a mine on his head. His cage will still open, but his head won't try to eat you.
Mark Reid, via email

6. IKARUGA

Glutton for punishment

There is a hidden ranking available. If you don't fire the Ikaruga once (don't kill any enemies, simply absorb and dodge their bullets), you will get the ranking Dot Eater.
Marcus Bradfield, Brighton

7. WWE: DAY OF RECKONING

A rush of blood to the head

Create a wrestler and choose trapping headbutts for your light, front grapple. Get a decent amount of power, then tap A when the match begins to repeatedly headbutt your opponent. Do this several times and you can pin your opponent with ease.
Andrea Galt, Kidlington

8. POKÉMON COLOSSEUM

What's on the menu?

Press start at the title screen, then, press B at the menu screen. The title screen will change. Repeat this to see more title screens.
Dave Gordon, Boston

9. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER

Snap happy

As Lenzo's apprentice, go to the Forest Haven and catch the firefly in a bottle that's flashing different colours near the Deku tree. Give it to Lenzo and he will upgrade your camera to the deluxe picto-box.
Stephen O'Callaghan, Ireland

10. PIKMIN 2

Stone cold

Read Olimar's journal and look at an enemy. If you press Z, you will temporarily encase the enemy you're looking at in stone.
Kieran Townes, Stoke-on-Trent





If only all doctors came armed with shotguns…

Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck on the Mamayev Hill mission on *Medal of Honor: European Assault*. The mission is very intense and I can't work out a decent strategy for it.
Dean Malsham, Cosham

Dr Kitts strips his rifle down, lubricates it, then looks in the mirror and asks 'Are you looking at me?'

Mamayev Hill is a particularly tough mission. Here's how to complete it. First off, you'll find the grenades you need to blow up the tank in the house with the machine gun nest upstairs. The best way to deal with the tank is to peek out of the first floor window and lob grenades at it.

Go west out of the house. When you get to the trench, go south to meet the Russian officer. After that, follow the road and use the machine gun just before the bridge to kill all the enemies in the village on the opposite side. Go to the village, pick up the bazooka from the tunnel, then go to the smoke in the middle of the road to set off the rocket strike signal.

Blow up the second tank on the hill, then use a demolition charge on the gates. Go through them, then turn left to get a bazooka, and go right and up the stairs. From here you can assassinate Gruebner. Take out the tank, then take the logbook that he drops.

Follow the passage below the stairs and blow up the three artillery guns that you find. Outside, let your team clear the trenches while you deal with the troops indoors. Follow the corridor around until you get to the map room, lob grenades at the guards inside, then shoot the enemy on the balcony. Finally, go upstairs to transmit the intelligence and blow up the cache at the bottom of the stairs.

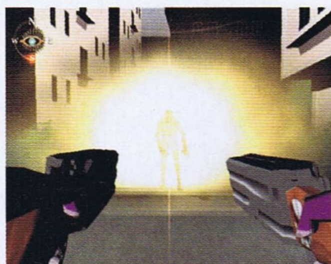
Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck on the bit in *Killer 7* where you have to kill Curtis Blackburn in a weird kind of bird-dictated duel. How do you defeat him?
Luke Davidson, Derby

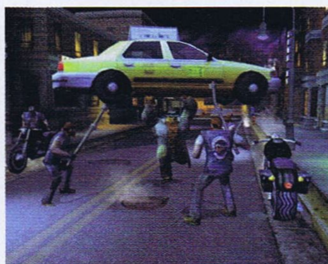
Dr Kitts remembers a time when duelling was legal, and the world was a better place.

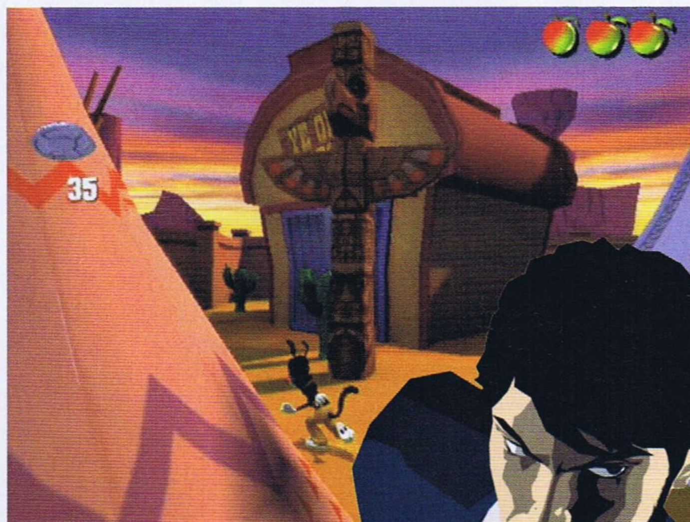
The idea for this boss fight is to shoot as soon as the bird flies. The first person to four shots wins. The trick is to know when the bird is going to fly and when it's just going to fake it. There is a way of telling, which should end your woes. When it's going to fly, you will notice that it bobs down ever so slightly just before it jumps. But when it's faking it, it will just go straight for it. So don't shoot at Curtis unless you see it bob first. After this, it's pretty easy, it's just a case of noticing that the bird wil give you a clue as to what it's going to do.

CODE BANK

Got an Action Replay?
Whack these codes into it…







KILLER 7

Master Code
H48J-TP07-82N9M
ADYR-6A0J-X6DET

DAN SMITH CODES
Maximum Power
JB0P-PCBA-DZ312
QK6C-ZNT2-58NVT

Maximum Speed
JG7H-7X5X-Q8E45
9DYB-DX0J-RZ0QA

Maximum Waver
JGRF-UXZ9-B76EQ
A6F1-NJHU-UDUBB

Maximum Criticals
YME4-MKNH-9FEXW
59UW-UW6N-43GZV

KAEDE SMITH CODES
Maximum Power
G25V-1C5C-PK9T5
QQN2-QNKF-DEXX0

Maximum Speed
70QV-A20A-YY13W
860D-UUNH-1NDGK

Maximum Waver
DVYF-PZGX-9DXP6
VW9A-9TB2-H1BAV

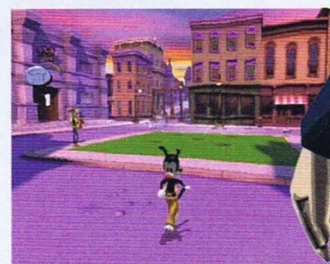
Maximum Criticals
WFBP-7139-1HW8A
NTE9-MTTY-E7BZE

FANTASTIC 4

Master Code
QY9F-N319-3TCU5
WG1K-46RA-T4MKY

Infinite Upgrade Points
TTNQ-CXBA-Y3REB
5WZ2-0QEZ-T30KZ

Unlock All Levels
8G3-A22T-4UAQW
CU2P-FF3M-6J1U2



ANIMANIACS THE GREAT EDGAR HUNT

Master Code
CQFU-8EKD-5QQ3G
34FT-80G5-JD6UF

Infinite Health
PDZ0-2V0R-1TTAZ
UW3V-76R6-M18UX

Maximum Health
3BEW-J2TR-7W58X
KV2U-KJF4-JY6UR



YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE…

Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a game. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP…

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy or scribble your entry on a piece of paper and then send it to us. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi. You know, to help focus your mind.



30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX



STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.



"Zombie friends"

In a fit of boredom, due to the insanely hot, stupid weather, I dug out *Animal Crossing* from my messy drawer. I hadn't been on it for about six months and all the villagers had either buggered off or formed an evil cult and were plotting against me. But while digging up a weed, it suddenly hit me – an idea that could finally strip Nintendo of its kiddy reputation! Fuse *Animal Crossing* with *Resi 4*.

Think about it. You, a weird boy/girl with horns, accidentally take a train to an old village (Los Animas or something Spanish). Your task is to help the remaining non-zombie-animal villagers by delivering goods such as hankies and videos to their also non-zombie-animal friend across the street. Along the way you'll meet zombie friends, fish for huge fish-monsters, and catch insects the size of hippos for the local museum. If you're lucky, on your travels you'll meet the travelling merchant and visit his shop, which for some reason is called Nook's Cranny. Save up enough potatoes and you'll be able to buy a scope for your spade from him – perfect for digging up weeds from a distance.

Oh yes, I forgot – watch out for the pig called Gertrude in the village, who can transform her arm into a massive claw/wing thing. This game can be fun for all the family, as well as scare you so much, you'll grow up to be a social retard. If a dude from Nintendo is reading, you know my number.

Matthew Slaney, Northallerton

That would be a brilliant game. If you don't take care of a villager, instead of leaving he could pop a bag on his head and chase you with a chainsaw whenever you're least expecting it. It would bring a new dimension to Mr Resetti, too. Ed



Bonus Letters

They just shake it off.
Toby Sperring, East Sussex
Hygiene always comes first. Ed

I can guarantee over 80% will not know who Sonic is.
David Hodgkins, Coventry
Probably the same 80% who can't recognise a photo of Jesus. Ed

Hope you don't mind my rant!
Mark Windever, Liverpool
Of course not. Ed

The 64 was a great machine but Nintendo convinced themselves, and tried to convince us, that they only needed their own games to sell it (which in fairness at the time they could).
Darren Revell, Plymouth
Good point. Ed

Nonetheless, the game will be fantastic.
Henrie van Meurs, Holland
Naturally. Ed

We NEED more information on the Kirby game for Gamecube. He is the coolest games character EVAR and I am almost as exited about that game than the *Twilight Princess*. I'm surprised you are not ecstatic about it, because I am! Also I need *Pikmin 2*. If I tell you a secret will you give it to you. Reply Y for yes and N for no.
Feargal Glean, via email
H. As in Huh? Ed

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

"It will end"

I was playing *Killzone* at the weekend and I thought, why don't we see this brilliance on Gamecube? But then, we have Mario. I could just about stand *Mario Party 7*, but *Dance Dance Revolution Mario Mix?* You have got to be kidding. I think they have taken Mario a bit too far, so I've come up with an idea for *Super Mario 128*.

I fart on your letter



This will be his final game. This time Bowser will kidnap Mario to test Peach's love for him.

You get to play as Peach, Toad or even Boo and Goomba. When Peach finally gets to Bowser, he will reveal that Mario is gone and then it will end. Keeps you wondering, doesn't it?

Mitchell Heath, Nuneaton

I was wondering who in their right mind would think that was a sensible idea for a game plot, but then I noticed you mentioned the words **Killzone** ***(a 60%-rated PS2 shooter) and brilliance in the same sentence. You're having me on. Ed***

"Music"

Have you ever found yourself sitting with your GBA SP pressed to your ear in order to hear as much as possible of a certain piece of music from *Fire Emblem?* I have. Sometimes I start *Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones* just to listen to 'Comrades'. So, I have started wondering why it is almost always the RPGs and strategy games that have the best music. Why must it be so? Isn't it possible for other genres to get composers as good as they have in Fire Emblem, for example? I mean, how many times do you see *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* soundtrack CDs on Ebay? I have found none, but I have seen lots of CDs for *Tales of Symphonia*. Is it a tradition to give the best music to RPGs? When I play *Timesplitters* I want to feel the hair on my neck rise up as it does when I listen to the music from *Golden Sun*, but it doesn't. The music just isn't good enough, I think.

What I want is good game music all around, so that soundtracks from genres other than RPGs are worth listening to. I mean, who doesn't like Hirokasu Ando's Fire Emblem remix for *Smash Bros*, or the Mute City soundtrack

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to): Ryan Dunkley, via email; Henry Tsang, Sudbury; Luke Bowyer, Cheshire; Øystein Heden Kålås, Norway; G Redshaw, via email; Win Li, via email; Joachim Johnsen, Norway; Charlie McDonnell, Bath; David Crawford, Leicester; Ross Main, Ulverston; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Rhys Simons, via email; Greg Calder, Edinburgh; Richard Ashton, Andover; Timothy Collins, London; Will Travers, via email; Richard Huntley, via email; S Jones, via email; Andrew Douglas, Glasgow; Paul Harries, Aberystwyth; William Oakley, Cambridge; Michael Bowen, via email; Omar, via email; Lucas Dennis, via email; David



from the F-Zero games? They are masterpieces. But the problem is that good music is rare in both fighting and racing games today. Is it just that the games with worse soundtracks are successful simply because of their graphics? If so, then the games industry has been poisoned to the core, because what is a game with a soundtrack that you don't like? I happened to like the hard rock soundtrack from *Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within*, but what if I hadn't? I really didn't think that the story was as good as in *Sands Of Time*, but the music kept me going forward until I completed it. That's what good music can do – a good soundtrack is as important as good graphics or a good story in terms of keeping players glued to the game.
Johan Bågenholm, Sweden

***Personal taste plays a role that you haven't acknowledged. While RPGs suit the sweeping, epic soundtracks you clearly love, others may prefer a different style of music. I often play through* Mario Kart Super Circuit *just to hear the ending theme, and I think Jesper Kydd's orchestral soundtracks for* Hitman 2 *and* Freedom Fighters *are fantastic. Oh, and perhaps you should invest in a headphones adapter so you don't have to keep holding your SP to your ear.* Ed**

"Love manga"

Looking at issue 109's NGC Pocket End Bit, I noticed you said you love manga but didn't have a clue who RokStar drew. Probably because if you're drawing manga, it doesn't always have to be of existing characters. Otherwise manga and anime wouldn't get very far if Japanese studios just copied someone else's works.
Jonathan Humphreys, Peterlee

***This is too pendantic even for the Correction Corner. Manga is the Japanese word for Japanese comics, so if an English person was to draw a manga character, it could be assumed that it's a character from said art form. Or something. For example, this drawing by a certain English artist is manga-style, not actual manga. Am I right or am I right?* Ed**



Bonus Letters

I am Scott Ranger.
Scott Ranger, Southampton
***Hello.* Ed**

I need your help, as you're the only people who I can trust!
Tony Southion, London
***No problem.* Ed**

With the buttons being so small people like me who have such large fingers wont be able to use them.
Sam Rose, Bingham
***You sausage-fingered types must have terrible trouble setting your wristwatches or using a remote control.* Ed**

Imagine how great it would be to be able to drum along to Bohemian Rhapsody.
Graham Lockwood, Wimborne
***Great, but we'd prefer Don't Stop Me Now.* Ed**

I, Nintendo, must concentrate on the impressionable 9-12 year-olds for the next generation. I know it is a small audience but as the console generation grows older the audience before it will come to the light and so I will grow an army. Of 11-year-olds.
Tom Cooper, Gloucester
***I'm seeing primary-coloured uniforms and a marching song by Koji Kondo.* Ed**

Recently, my sister woke up at 4.30am, ran into the garden and shouted, "My name is Reggie, I'm about kicking ass, I'm about taking names," into the cold night air. Her name is not Reggie, by the way.
Keiron Harman, Torquay
***This makes me very happy indeed.* Ed**

"Sheer fun"

I played *Resident Evil* for the first time in absolutely ages, and it brought back a few gaming memories from when I first bought my Gamecube. This was the first killer title I had bought, although I had thoroughly enjoyed *Luigi's Mansion* and *Super Smash Bros Melee* beforehand.

At that time, while decapitating one of those Crimson Heads, I thought it couldn't get any better than this. I didn't realise how wrong I was going to be! Nintendo, with the Gamecube, brought the most amount of innovation and sheer fun to this generation. There are so many stone-cold classics – *Metroid Prime, Wind Waker, Eternal Darkness, Mario Sunshine*, the Mario sports games, the utterly superb *Resident Evil* series, *Paper Mario 2, Timesplitters, Melee, Luigi's Mansion* – the list is endless. As Nintendo fans, we have never had it so damn good, and this will continue into the next generation with Revolution. And for now, *Killer 7* and *Twilight Princess* are just two titles on a big list of class games coming very soon.
Euan Black, via email

***I sense some serious Nintendo love right here.* Ed**



△ Gamecube – the little, purple home of excellent Nintendo gaming.

"Holy on it"

I've been wondering lately, as I browse through your magazine, about graphics. Don't get me wrong, I don't think this generation of consoles has perfect graphics, but they are getting close, and if they don't reach full-scale realism in the next generation, then developers probably aren't using the power that is put in front of them. My point is simply this – after Revolution and the rest, do we really need another update in graphics? And if we don't, then Sony and Microsoft are going to have to start innovating, rather than renovating for their new consoles. That is when Nintendo will reach its prime, as the other companies fall into a cycle of stagnation.

Also, on an entirely unrelated note, I was reading through your (very old) *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles* guide, when I noticed a horrible glaring error on the part of whoever did the research. The boss of the Conall Curach swamp (which you named Dragon, or something) is a FREAKIN' GHOST. Nowhere in the guide does it say that by casting Holy on it you can make it fall over within ten seconds.
James Trimble, Southport

***Geraint sweated blood to write that guide. When I told him how much effort he could have saved, simply by being just a* tiny *bit good at games, he crawled under his desk and started making whale noises. When he emerged several hours later, his hair had turned completely white.* Ed**

CORRECTION CORNER

Super Play issue 12 was not released in July 1998. The mag you were writing about was issue 21, released in July 1994. Neither 1998 nor 1994 were 'nine years' ago and 'Cotton 100%' was actually called 100% Cotton. Bring back Andrea's Stick and go Neko on that art monkey's ass.
Rich Bolton, Nottingham

***I'm making notes in my Big Book of Hurt. Boy, is there a whole lotta hurt in that book…* Ed**

Issue 109, page 17, the picture for *Super Bomberman 2* is wrong. It is a picture of *Super Bomberman*.
James Fellows, via email

***Duly noted.* Ed**

Issue 109's Yoshi graph – the numbers are the same above and below the X axis. Oh, and since when could Yoshi egg-roll in the N64's *Smash Bros?*
Luke Bowyer, Cheshire

***Noted. Now where's Andrea's number?* Ed**

Lawless, Milton Keynes; Francis Tripp, via email; Mel Tennemann, Belgium; Scott Dwyer, London; Helen and Malcolm Stuthridge, near the muddy banks of the Mersey; Jason Sharpe, via email; Chris O'Neill, Ireland; Stephen Rees, via email; Adam Smith, Liverpool; James Firth, Derby; Michael Simpson, not actually related to Tom (or Bart); Daniel Entwistle, Bolton; Cameron Wildsmith, Newcastle; Trevor Byrne, Dublin; Anthony Collins, Ireland; Chris Watson, Kidderminster; Mark Lindsay, Norwich; Peter Vaughn, via email; Alex Roberts, London; Bradley Gunson, Preston; Alanna Donnelly, Preston; Kevin van Calsteren, Nottingham; and loads of others whose names got kind of deleted off the bottom of our Word document. Cheers, folks!



MAILBOX

"Can I argue that it does not?"

"Cheats"

Do you remember the Amiga days when you'd pause the game and type in words like Iwantlives or something like that? That was a cheat. What did it do? It would give you more lives, maybe even infinite lives. That's a proper cheat, put there with the knowledge that someone would eventually discover it.

In those days magazines were in two minds regarding cheats. Do they spoil games? Do they make them too easy? And for a long time cheats were frowned upon. The tide changed when we moved to the console era, with dedicated cheat cartridges such as Game Genie and Action Replay offering an easy way to mess with a game's design. These devices were met with some resistance. Being unable to tell if somebody had used them was the most common fear, while others welcomed the ability to unlock things such as the secret part of *GoldenEye*'s Dam, which was otherwise unreachable because Rare locked it out of the final version.

Gaming has changed and is more sophisticated, and cheating has also followed this trend. There are button codes, tips, unlockables and glitches that could be considered cheating in some games. A whole variety of cheating, but I think we need to be a little more precise in our definition. For instance, most gaming mags these days seem to think a players' guide or unlockable information (ie you need to finish the game on hard to unlock X character) falls under cheats. Can I argue that it does not?

Every gamer would know if there's an unlockable in a game from either reading a review or from clear indicators within the game (eg blanked-out spaces in the character selection screen). It's pretty obvious that unlocking these come through either completing the game on the hardest level, or in a time frame or with a high score. So stop printing obvious unlockables as 'cheats'.

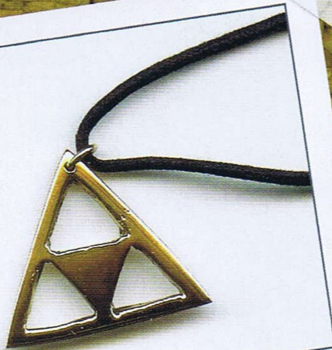
I know in my mind what was and is a cheat. These days, things like *Mario Kart* shortcuts are published as cheats, which is something they are definitely not. Anyway, I think you get the picture, and hopefully at least the cheats in your mag will improve if you take on board any of my comments.

Tom Gaffikin, via email

Nice history lesson! Actually, we've had a section called Tips Extra (not Cheats Extra) every month for the past seven years. If we reveal how to unlock a character, that isn't a cheat but it's a tip that may not have been immediately obvious to many players. Ed

CREATIVE CORNER

Made by you, printed by us.



"Woodwork"

I spent six weeks making this little beauty, in woodwork classes. It's made from bronze and has been polished by machine. This is one of the few things that Ninty nutters can make themselves and display with pride, without looking foolish.

Jonathan Trier Brikner, Denmark

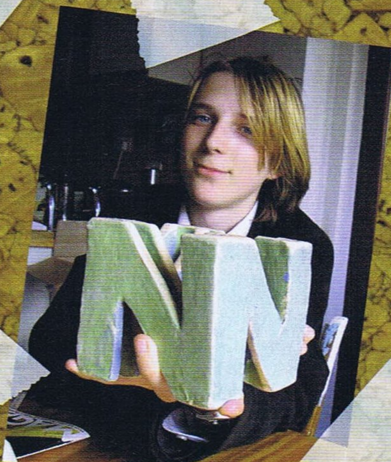
Watch out for Ganondorf when you're wearing that thing. Anyway, woodwork? Are Danish trees made of bronze? Ed

"Beautiful"

Here's a gorgeous piece of pottery that my friend Ricky James (pictured with pottery), shaped exactly like the N-cube, as seen on the front of every good N64 console. Also, I think we should all applaud Ricky for managing to look almost exactly like Leon Kennedy from *Resi 4*, only even more beautiful.

Arthur Plant, Thornhill

Congratulations! Ed





'Possibly hungry'

I drew this while at work in a newsagents. It's so boring there that I had to do something, and here it is – Link being attacked by an angry and possibly hungry pack of Pikachus.

Matt Wyles, Hove

What's that one doing to his leg? Ed

"Pants"

I was playing *Banjo-Tooie* recently, as I have finished all my GC games and can't afford any more. I was on Hailfire Peaks when I wandered into Boggy's igloo and noticed they were watching Mr Pants on their television. Is this the first appearance of Mr Pants?

Kev Parry, Padiham



Mr Pants used to be a mascot on Rare's website for a few years before he ever starred in any games. Anybody know exactly when and where he first appeared? Anybody interested? I can't believe we're discussing the origins of Mr Pants… Ed

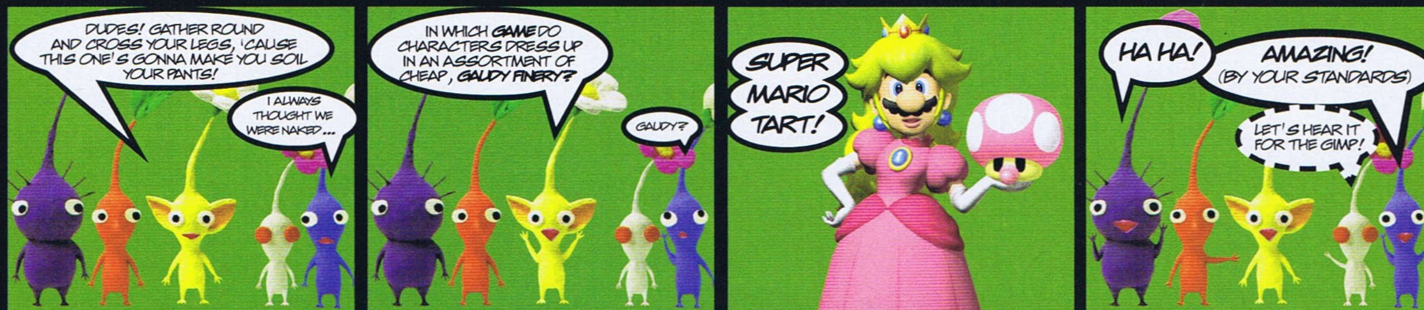
"Wonderful"

I'm a recent fan of Nintendo. I've been a devout PC gamer for the past four or five years. Last September I decided to ignore my fears and buy myself a Gamecube. Immediately a wealth of options erupted towards me as I joined the worldwide Nintendo following. *Double Dash* online? Done. Exploring the wonderful world of *The Wind Waker*? Done. The glorious shooting gallery that is *Resident Evil 4?* Done.



GriNtendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY ANDREW WYNNE



WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

Why did I choose the Gamecube over the PS2 and Xbox? The answer is simple, and is answered in the second sentence of my letter. The majority of the best games on both the PS2 and Xbox are available in better versions on the PC. Excellent games such as *San Andreas* and *Vice City*, the cornerstones of PS2's popularity, have been released on the PC, while Xbox games such as *Halo, Star Wars Battlefront* and more have come out on the PC, in bigger, better versions. Meanwhile, the quiet, wonderful Gamecube has a wealth of options unavailable to PC gamers. Mario, Zelda, Metroid, *Animal Crossing*, Fire Emblem…

So, all you people out there still unsure about which side to take in the Big Three, go for Nintendo. It's the clear winning option.
Simon Wang, via email

While most of us don't have the equipment/expertise/patience to get* Double Dash *working online via the unofficial Warp Pipe software, I can see why Nintendo would be the obvious console choice for PC gamers. And if you ever heard rumours of an enhanced version of* Twilight Princess *being developed for PC, it would be a sure sign that the universe as we know it was about to collapse. Ed

"Calculations"

Using very basic observation and calculations (by comparing prices with like-sized flash memory cards), it's blatantly clear that Nintendo make a mint on every memory card they sell for the Gamecube. So will we have to buy special/rip-off Nintendo-branded SD cards for the Revo, or will any store-bought SD card work with it? I can't see Nintendo relinquishing such a valuable source of revenue for the Revo.
Tony Pang, Orpington

The whole point of having a standard like Secure Digital is to ensure that any SD-approved flash memory will work in any SD-compatible hardware. You'll be able to use SD cards from your phone, camera or TV, if you have any. No doubt there will be an official Revolution-branded SD card from Nintendo, but you can say goodbye to the days of paying £20 for a few megabytes. Current SD prices: £45 per 1GB. Ed



▷ The SD card adapter thing for Gamecube. Only released in Japan.

SO TELL ME THIS...

Where all your queries are answered.

1. I've heard that Nintendo are planning to release their own wireless routers for the DS which can be plugged into your PC via a USB port and will allow you to play online using your own internet connection. Will these be compatible with dial-up connections or will I need broadband?
2. What's all this I'm hearing about Rare games coming to DS?
Andrew Bell, Seaham

1. Such devices already exist, so you don't have to wait for an official Nintendo method of connecting to the internet. You can use any wireless router or gateway that conforms to the current 802.11 standard (which is to say, all of them). However, these are not compatible with dial-up connections. You can only play online DS games via broadband. We'll be printing a full tutorial and hardware test as soon as the first online games are available.
2. They're advertising for DS programmers on their website.

1. Why are there not going to be any more Star Wars games for the Gamecube?
2. When the Revolution is released, will you be changing the name of the magazine?
3. What would you do if Zelda: Twilight Princess *turns out to be a big disappointment?*
Fraser Nicholson, Inverclyde

1. Despite the success of the many previous Star Wars games for Nintendo consoles, Lucasarts are concentrating on the more lucrative PS2, Xbox and PC markets these days.
2. Yes. We're thinking about calling it either Ninty-Revo-Maniacs or Game N. Which do you prefer?
3. That's absolutely not going to happen.

The wireless connectivity of the DS is a stroke of genius, but would you be able to play it on a plane? The airlines are already fussy enough about mobiles and so on being turned on. Would the WiFi system cause similar problems?
Chris Gilman, Leigh

It's a bit of a grey area, and policy may vary between airlines. Because DS-to-DS link doesn't use the full-power WiFi antenna, you're unlikely to accidentally land your flight at the bottom of the Atlantic thanks to a sneaky game of* Metroid Hunters, *but it's best to check first.

"Happens next"

Fire Emblem: Blazing Sword is based on Eliwood's gripping journey, and is the prequel to the Japan-only *Sealed Sword*, which is Roy's story. Now if Roy is Eliwood's son, who is also a popular character in *Smash Bros*, and his tale is the sequel to a game available to us English folk now, why doesn't Nintendo release an English version of *Sealed Sword*? It's bound to be a hit because everyone wants to know about and play Roy's game – after all, we've seen him and played as him in one of Gamecube's most popular titles!

Yes, I am excited about the new Game Boy and Gamecube Fire Emblem games, but shouldn't I be allowed to play the series chronologically? I know *Sealed Sword* was made before *Blazing Sword* but loads of games have been re-released later, haven't they?
Alice Gill, via email

Some of the early Final Fantasy games were remade in English after the series became popular in the West, so how about some kind of Fire Emblem mega-mix to clear things up, Nintendo? Ed



With Mark Green

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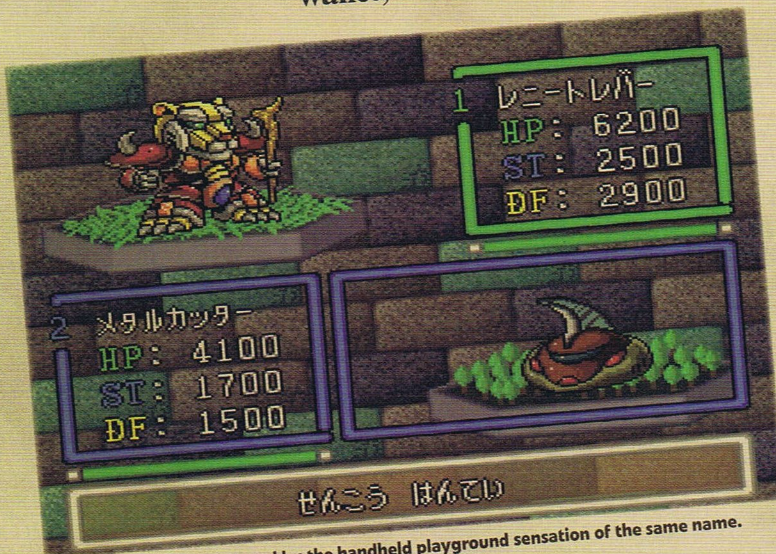
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THE FAMILY TREE

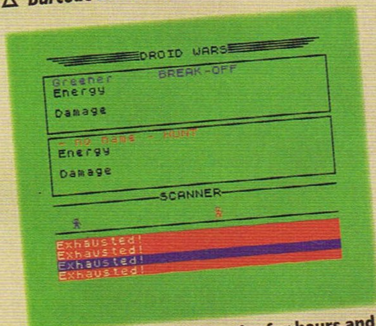
The sordid history of today's bestest games

A Brief History of the Pocket Monster

This month… As Pokémon makes yet another assault on your poorly-stocked wallet, we recall its forgotten forebears.



△ ***Barcode Battler*: spawned by the handheld playground sensation of the same name.**



△ ***Droid Wars*: Type in codes for hours and just stare in awe at the results.**

DROID WARS (1986, SPECTRUM)
You actually had to code this robo-battler yourself by typing codes listed in Your Sinclair magazine. One typing error and you'd cock the whole thing up and have to meticulously check every code again. Anyway, there were no cuddly creatures, just robots with tweakable stats scrapping for you after saying, "Those about to die salute you." Bless.

DRAGON QUEST V (1992, SNES)
Here's an idea: an RPG where the monsters you fight can join your team. Enix are probably still weeping themselves to sleep about the fact they only released it in Japan, and then let Pokémon improve on their idea for BIG MONEY.

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI (1992, SNES)
Upsettingly morbid RPG that did a better job of 3D-izing Pokémon than *Pokémon Colosseum*. No Pokéball nonsense here – instead you had to *bribe* the monsters.

BARCODE BATTLER: SENKI WARS (1993, SNES)
Based on a kids' toy of yore that scanned in barcodes off crisps and bread and created monsters from them. This SNES oddity was as antiquated as wooden cutlery. Battles look familiar…

ROBOTREK (1994, SNES)
Pokémon with robots, basically. And two years before Game Freak had finished coding 'em all. This is eerily similar to The Big P, although the fact that the hero wakes up in bed at the start counts for nothing – *all* Japanese RPGs start like that.

It kicks off with you building your first bot and fiddling with its statistics using a machine that looks a mutated joypad. From there, it's spot-the-similarity time. The robot fits in a ball in your pocket (one), while you learn the ins and outs of kicking bot from a professor (two) in a white coat (three), and wander fields full of opponents (four) and caves swarming with random monster attacks (five). Your pocket pals also do your fighting for you (six) and improve their abilities (seven), while you grab objects from balls left lying around (eight). Red and white balls, that is (nine).

Robotrek was no bazillion-selling playground king, though. If you can imagine a Pokémon game made up of nothing but those tortuous caves – with Final Fantasy-style 'live' battles rather than elegant turn-based brilliance – you're halfway to understanding why *Robotrek* is just as much of an ordeal as its name makes it sound. And swapping your pocket army with friends? Forget it.

TAMAGOTCHI (1996)
Stretching the definition of a 'game' to its limit, Tamagotchis brainwashed the nation for a short while in 1996. Even the grumpiest of grown-ups fell in love with the gluttonous pixel-blobs on key rings.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1005

RETRO NEWS

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.




PAST SHOW

Flickr is a classy website that allows all comers to upload their photos into public galleries. We once found a picture of an Oompa Loompa playing a Gamecube. But, more to the point, someone called Petromyzon (not their real name) has brought together a very professional gallery of handheld gaming toys from the '70s and '80s, including a table-top version of *Donkey Kong*, as well as some amazing shots of old arcades. See a man dressed as a cowboy playing old coin-ops while you still can!

■ www.flickr.com/photos/petromyzon/sets/538195/



RED HOT AUCTION

There's been a lot of fuss about Videogame Auctions this month, a new auction site that's a gold mine of retro-related bits and bobs. The rather rare SNES game *Winter Gold* (one of the last to contain the flashy 3D Super FX chip) was beckoning us with a digital wink when we visited, as was one of those Satellaviews we keep banging on about (a kind of online adapter for the SNES). The reason for the aforementioned fuss, by the way: the website is working with game cops ELSPA to stamp on people selling counterfeit gamery.

■ www.videogameauctions.co.uk

MUSIC MARIO, PLEASE

We may still be a long way from Radio 3 following Beethoven's Concerto for Violin in D with Taito's High-Score Table Theme from *Rainbow Islands*, but America's very first videogame music tour takes us one glorious step closer. It kicked off on July 6th at the Hollywood Bowl, with 11,000 people turning up to hear the Los Angeles Philharmonic blasting out music from games – including audio retro magic from Mario, Zelda, Castlevania, Sonic, Pong, Donkey Kong and more. Best of all: the blindfolded pianist bloke who plays an increasingly fast version of the Mario theme got to play.

■ www.videogameslive.com

NET TENDO

Smooth digital



Of all the things you'd expect Michael Jackson to do to resurrect his shattered career, dancing his way through a montage of old NES games probably wouldn't be the first to spring to mind. But, thanks to the relentless hard work of some Japanese Jacko lovers, here he is moonwalking through *Track & Field*, kicking his way around *Yoshi's Cookie*, and turning into a giant metallic robot to spit lasers out of his chest at Bowser (pictured above). If only they had this as evidence for the defence at Jackson's recent trial, he'd almost certainly have been an instant hero. Ow! Mario is quite right to be puzzled.

■ http://www.hcn.zaq.ne.jp/cabic508/rsf/mq.swf

DVD at last



Are you tired of not being able to play movies – or even normal-sized discs – on your console? Take a lesson from Brandon at the unnervingly-named 'milkmycow' website – he's turned his NES into a DVD player. "It is waaaay cool," reports Brandon, and even offers to sell you one if the price is right. Another piece of antique Nintendo kit has its game-playing guts ripped out for the sake of 21st century entertainment, then. Antiques Roadshow 2055 is going to be a very lonely place.

■ http://www.milkmycow.com/sections/nesdvd/

FIVE Things

The five best ever toilets to feature in videogames.

Inspired by the collection at www.btinternet.com/~l.a.lester/Toilet/



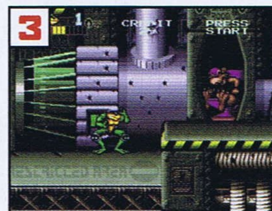
1 BREATH OF FIRE II

Characters in Squaresoft's epic RPG look like they have to suffer in the toilet stakes. Basic, worryingly short on privacy, and with some kind of odd little waterfall at the back in place of modern plumbing. It looks a like a flooding risk to us. Uncomfortably medieval, too.



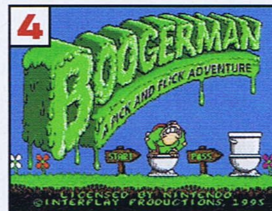
2 HOME ALONE

You probably remember all the important details from the film of the same name. McCauley Culkin living in the glittering, golden palace of some kind of ancient Egyptian emperor, where toilets are made of crystal. No wonder the burglars were so interested in the place…



3 BATTLETOADS

Rare always had a strange obsession with the toilet, but this is the first one we've ever seen that's actually in use – and in use by a giant, constipated rat at that. We haven't seen too many burgundy-coloured loos in our time, either. It's a space toilet, see.



4 BOOGERMAN

It's hard to believe that crawling out of a toilet is probably the least disgusting thing that the manners-free Boogerman did during his self-explanatory 'pick and flick' adventure. And we're not even going to mention the flinging of toilet paper and passing of wind…



5 MICRO MACHINES 2

Clearly, *clearly*, too big.

RETRO TAT

NES key rings unlock the past

Actually, we've probably used that 'unlock the past' gag before. But who can blame us now that unstoppable tat merchants Banpresto are up to their 157th retro key ring (comedy exaggeration also previously used)? Still, we can't help but lose our hearts to these – just look at the little *Ice Climber* chap hanging on to the bird. Trusty import shop NCSX is likely to get these in at some point, but in the meantime, Banpresto's Japanese website has the details (www.banpresto.co.jp). The online translation service we used reckons the first key ring is "Mariobrazarz".



WRITE IN!

Can you guess which item Banpresto will add to their retro range next? Tell us and we'll print your name in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk.

THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

The world according to **Super Play, Issue 12. Oct 1993.**





The plot of *Lagoon* had quite an environmental theme; you're sent on a quest to find the cause of some mysterious pollution.





Interestingly Nasir, the main character, ages throughout the game.



GAME OF THE MONTH
LAGOON
SUPER NINTENDO



As is traditional in RPGs, you help out some villagers with their problems.

Muddy waters don't run deep, as we found out after getting all excited…

WHAT'S THIS? Kemco RPG with a riveting plot based on muddy water. This received a glowing preview in Super Play, led the mag's bumper RPG special, then earned itself an embarrassing 56%. Oops.

THE BIG DEAL: Apparently a Japanese love-object at the time (probably on account of looking as pretty as a cake), *Lagoon* was one of the first proper RPGs to hit the UK after *Zelda: A Link to the Past*.

WHAT WE THOUGHT: "Just picture *Lagoon* as a tiny, naive, badly-adjusted child looking up to its big brother, Zelda," slammed reviewer Andy Lowe. He was almost in tears after spending hours talking to dogs ('Bow wow') and searching featureless caves looking for one elusive door.

FROM THE SAME DEVELOPER AS: *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure* on Gamecube.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Squaresoft came to the UK's rescue with their large box of role-playing treasures (*Breath of Fire*), and Kemco tried in vain to atone for their mistakes with the awful *Drakkhen*. Andy never did find that door.

AND: There's something funny about skeletons who, despite having no skin, still wear robes.

Everyone was playing…

SUPER STAR WARS
SUPER NINTENDO



△ The Jawa Sandcrawler level: an absolute nightmare.



△ We're pretty sure the sand-speeder didn't have guns in the film…

Lucasarts platformer based on Episode IV. 'Based' being the operative word – we don't remember Luke slaughtering Jawas…

Coded by Sculptured Software (which later became Acclaim Salt Lake City, responsible for such games as *Legends of Wrestling 2* and *ECW: Hardcore Revolution*), *Super Star Wars* was wedged at the top of the charts like an Ewok up a U-bend. It loosely followed the plot of the first Star Wars film, juggling game styles like a clown in one of those weird Jedi dressing gowns. There was side-scrolling desert blasting one minute, obscenely fast 3D vehicle piloting the next, and all rock-hard. We thought nothing of losing our last life on the near-impossible Jawa Sandcrawler level and being Force-d (ha!) to go all the way back to the first level (no saves back then, see). Bloody annoying the enemy's 100%-accurate laser shots were.



OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

Dungeon Master
Stand-out dungeon magic – the very definition of old-school role-playing.
88%

Out to Lunch
Chubby chef with a net catches fleeing food. Relentlessly cute platformer.
84%

Zombies Ate My Neighbours
Comedy-horror shoot-'em-up with a dose of the giant babies.
89%

Worst game…

THE REN & STIMPY SHOW VEEDIOTS
SUPER NINTENDO





Although it has been long since ousted in the surreal cartoon stakes by a talking sponge with a crab cake obsession, Ren and Stimpy were once upon a time the animated superstars du jour. This rubbish was suitably 'out there' – at a time when walking through a giant mouth or dressing a small log in lipstick and a blonde wig was the very height of whimsy – but erstwhile **NGC** editor Jonathan Davies found its tedious 2D platforming action "deeply sub-incredible." We would make a Ren and Stimpy joke here if we could remember what they actually did. Oh well.

Other news…

Old news, tastefully repackaged



PRICE PLUNGE

Nintendo put on the Nice Hat and promised to drop the price of Super Nintendo carts to £40, but publishers moaned they couldn't follow suit because of Ninty's licence fee demands. This from the days when *Street Fighter II Turbo* would have set you back 65 nicker. Ack!

PHONE HOME


EMERGENCY!
Dial… ERM, (0703) 652222!
We overcome our fear of phones and talk to the people at the other end of the Nintendo Hotline

Super Play dropped in on the home of the Nintendo Hotliners, the people paid to help gamers get through games. "Questions about Sega games [are] pretty weird," said boss Jane Shipperley, referring to confused Sega game owners wailing for assistance. Not any more, eh, Jane?

CRYSTAL BALLS

Super Play was twelve months old and the team marked the occasion by predicting the shape of the future. They prophesied that games would "enable you to smell nosh as it appears on-screen," and that everyone would be living in Iceland.


SUPER PLAY'S BIRTHDAY B
Predictions For The Next Year

NGC CLASSICS

Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART
LAWNMOWER MAN: SNES (1993)



We include this as an uncomfortable reminder of the 'revolutionary' space-age technology that never was. In the mid '90s, we all tingled at the prospect virtual reality – putting monstrously oversized goggles on your face for up-close 3D gaming. The Pierce Brosnan-starring movie of the same name attracted lots of attention for using the idea as a central premise, and featuring a bit of computer-generated snogging. The gurning scare-face of this CGI bloke seemed like the future. It wasn't.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE
NINJA GAIDEN: NES (1988)

You didn't get many cutscenes on the NES, and that's one of the reasons why *Ninja Gaiden* is remembered so well. This first scene stumbles into unintentionally funny Metal Gear territory with shifty looks and a double-crossing woman, but it's a testament to the cutscene's quality that although the later SNES compilation tidied them up, the graphical quality couldn't be surpassed.

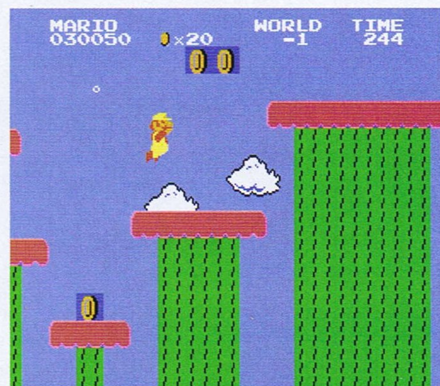




△ There's no flag for a reason...

CLASSIC COCK-UP
SUPER MARIO BROS: NES (1985)

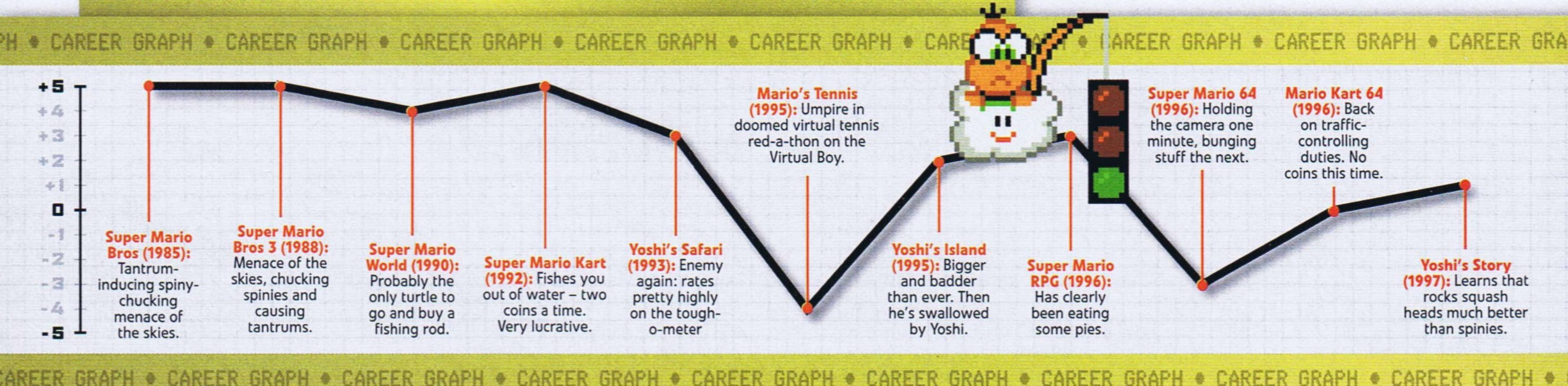
It's about time we dredged up the young Miyamoto's first cock-up. First, scamper along to the pipe at the end of World 1-2. Leave the last brick above the pipe intact, but break the two next to it. Now stand at the edge of the pipe, face left, duck, and jump towards the intact block while pushing left. Enter the first pipe you find. Ta-da – the infamous 'minus world', an endless submerged domain.



△ It may look like a normal level, but it *never ends.*

CAREER GRAPH: Lakitu

Loyalty-shifting turtle who wanders lonely as a cloud.



CLASSIC BOSS

EARTHWORM JIM SNES (1994)



EARTHWORM JIM
press start
options

If you've played 2001's GBA update of this, you'll know that, while Jim might have been considered the crown prince of platforming back in the day, his adventures have dated like a pint of milk left lying around on the surface of the sun. Bob the goldfish, though, still rocks. Bob is a furious fish with designs on ruling the world, and pulls out all the stops to foil our multi-segmented hero at the end of level three. Being a goldfish, though, all he can do is float about a bit and stare as angrily as a bowl-dwelling dust-eater can. Boss tactic, then: gently knock the bowl to the floor. Fin.



△ **Although explosive fun, Blast Corps was tough.**



CLASSIC LEVEL

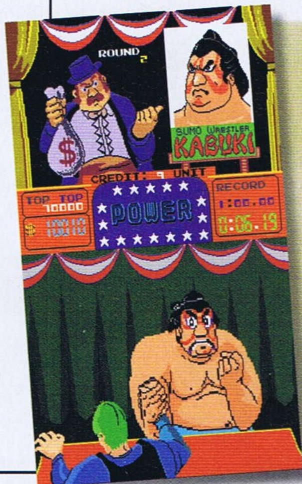
BLAST CORPS OYSTER HARBOUR

While writing about Rare's brilliant *Blast Corps* a few issues back, we were prompted to blow the spiders off our old Nintendo 64 cartridge and rerun the fun for old time's sake. In the process, we got our socks blown off once again by Oyster Harbour – a level that Jes said at the time "mixes all that's great about *Blast Corps* into a dazzling whole." Correct!

Why? Because, like all the levels in the explosion-happy *Blast Corps*, it was entirely based around giving every last bit of scenery a terminal case of the collapses. But, as one of the toughest stages in the entire game – and in *Blast Corps*, that's saying something – it was enormously satisfying to finally crack.

Using all the best vehicles (Ramdozer for a bit of the old brainlessly-barging-through-buildings; Ballista for the wheelies), Oyster Harbour was actually a sly chain of intelligent puzzles, which had you blowing up entire bridges with TNT, joy-riding in barges, and sitting back and watching things blow up spectacularly in a fountain of boiling brick.

Even the music was absolutely spot on; a brilliant combination of tension and enjoyability. And to top it all off, we always quite fancied the girl at the end, who made us blush an ungodly shade of burgundy by saying, "You're just trying to impress me." We've grown up a bit now. Don't look at us like that…



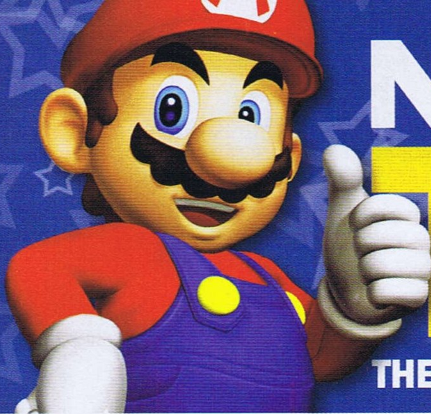
LOST CLASSIC

ARM WRESTLING: ARCADE (1985)

***Punch-Out!!* you've heard of, but this follow-up (supplied to arcade owners as a set of chips they could stick in their existing *Punch-Out!!* machine) is less well-known.** It's a simple idea: Little Mac attempts to wrench opponents' forearms out of their sockets with the help of your timed joystick moves. There's tons of speech, and Mac's wide variety of grunts ('Yak-a-do! Yak-a-do! Wook-a-po! Wook-a-po!') perfectly capture the feeling of your head getting ready to explode. Interestingly, it's one of the last twin-screen devices Nintendo made before the DS. Nice to see them wasting a whole screen on some static imagery, there.







NGC TOP 100

THE BEST GAMECUBE GAMES YOUR MONEY CAN BUY…

WHY YOU NEED IT!



Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**

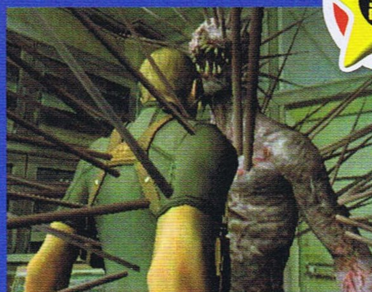


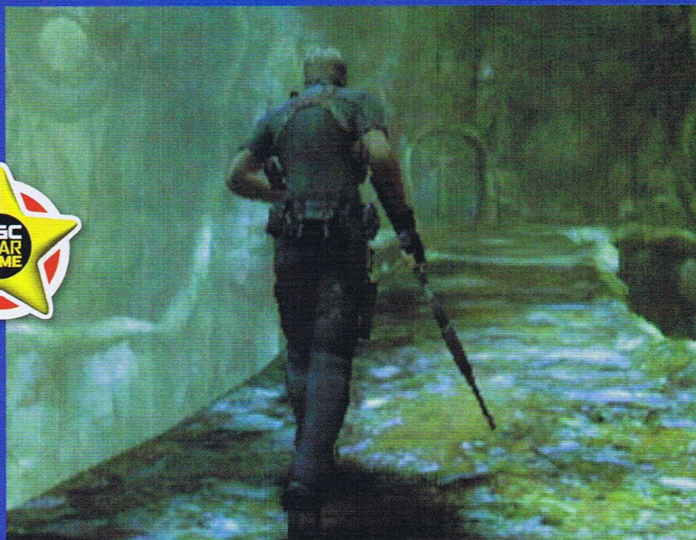
1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

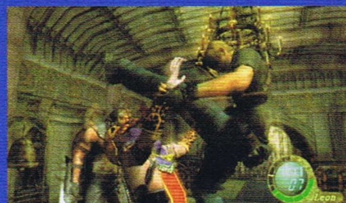
CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the Resi series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

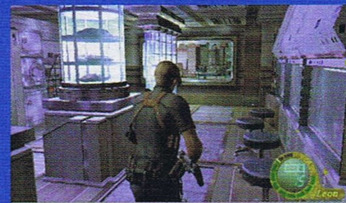












2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

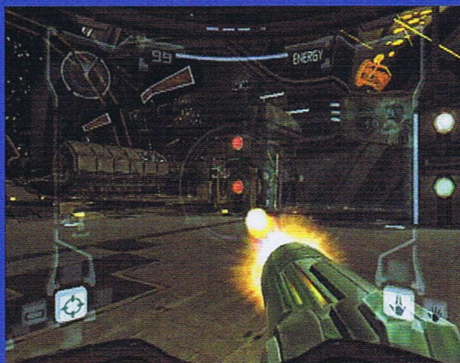
NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.









3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.





4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story (about vandalism and poisonous brown slime). Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those… *(who writes this nonsense? Ed)*







5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.



6 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!! 93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.



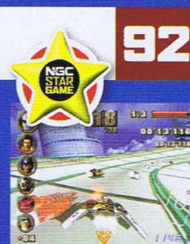




7 F-ZERO GX 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

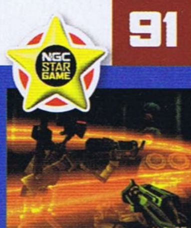
Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco have dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.



10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

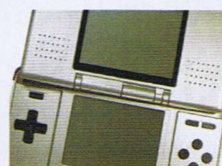
EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future and you will love every minute. The multiplayer is the icing on the cake.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2
Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!
Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.

3 WARIO WARE
Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.

4 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA
An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.

5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.

6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.

7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…

8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.

9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION
Everything that has ever made Metroid great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.

10 HARVEST MOON
A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It will last you for months.



DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



12 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91

Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and has few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…



13 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.



14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a game where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.



15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.



17 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.





18 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel-shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.



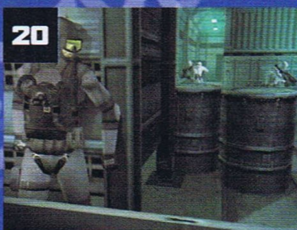
19 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.



20



METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

This is a superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. There are some problems: the long cutscenes, it only takes a day to complete and there are too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game.



21 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. Then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.



22 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAMES — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended.



23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE I & 2 — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.



24 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.



TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Sheer bongos-for-D-pad brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 — 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What else do you need?



26 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast, boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life" our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest for some missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks dated now.



28 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict Desert Storm.* There's a completely new aspect to this one – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.



29 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade…), but the only real difference is that it's now in 3D, which will affect your strategies for the better.



30



ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone; there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's very nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

This is an obscure Zelda game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – Tetra's Trackers – had been included.



32 RESIDENT EVIL 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89
UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. The 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish.

34 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 89
SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is absolutely great fun as well.

35 SSX 3 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

36 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer is worth the expense.

37 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

38 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or a social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

39 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. Apart from that, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

40 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

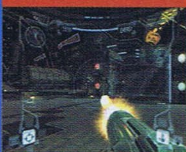
SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, but there are no substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

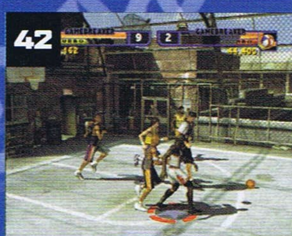
TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT 88
EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised, instead it was just given a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. However, the multiplayer's still explosively good fun, the trademark humour is in place, it's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is now a lot more cohesive as a single-player game.

42



NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball fitted with EA's successful Street template. You simply don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats really are absolutely vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street* has got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves – all this is crammed into an incredibly fun, fast-moving game.

43 DONKEY KONGA 2 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to wind up in casualty with tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough minigames, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

44 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This sounds confusing, but it all makes perfect sense in practice. You'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

45 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

46 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87
EA ■ NGC/82
All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start as a mere rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – although their blokes won't be too happy… Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

47 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

48 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

49 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best Star Wars game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

50 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87
CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

51 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade, too; even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and it won't last as long as you'd like.

52 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86
SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

53 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

54 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was an absolutely killer racer in its day, but it was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

55 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

56 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.



DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

57 XIII 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam'…) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

58 NFL 2K3 86

SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.

59 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86

EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack 'n' slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

60 NBA LIVE 2004 86

EA ■ NGC/88

Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

61 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old Resi atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere…).

62 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a Mario game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

63 IKARUGA 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

64 FIFA 2004 85

EA ■ NGC/87

The healthy rivalry between FIFA and Pro Evo continues. This is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are now menu-driven. It's all here.

65 EXTREME G 3 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed, and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons. The only downside to it is that it's a bit soulless and the multiplayer mode is nowhere near as good as it could have been.

66 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY 85

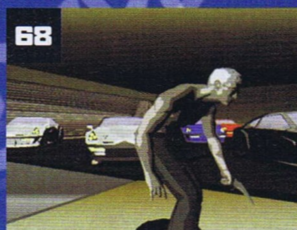
UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

This was the game that was supposed to give the Splinter Cell series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spring cleaning – the levels are no longer linear, for example – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

67 SPIDER-MAN 2 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed and some of the quests and missions get a bit samey, but still… that swinging!



68 KILLER 7 84

CAPCOM ■ NGC/109

Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the evil 'terrorists' (well, weird invisible blob-monsters), the Heaven's Smiles. So weird you *have* to try it.

69 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on and the fiddly controls are the only let-down.

70 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

71 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84

NAMCO ■ NGC/100

This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate as well.

72 RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

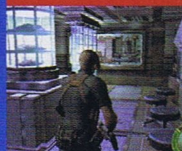
HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Takes the Resident Evil series to new heights by cranking up the action.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 ISS 2 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable, but then EA found out and made their FIFA games better. They both ramped up their quality while the GC *ISS* was left behind in their wake. *ISS 2* is a good game, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

74 ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE 83

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.

75 SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

76 BATEN KAITOS 83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

77 FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83

EA ■ NGC/86

Although less serious than *Conflict Desert Storm 2*, this is a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Many of the levels interact with each other, so objectives completed or neglected in one mission will affect the events in another. Forget the serious side, this is pure fun.



78 FIFA 2003 83

EA ■ NGC/75

After many years of yearly statistic and ever-so-slight gameplay tweaks (and the resulting criticism), this was the turnaround for the FIFA series. After having the football crown stolen by Pro Evo, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football. This is a massive leap forward from previous FIFA games.

79 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with a timer!



80 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82
SEGA ■ NGC/78
If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series. There are new minigames, and over 100 levels.



81 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82
VIVENDI ■ NGC/88
As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and it's your task to defeat an army of robots using your considerable arsenal. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick. Although the camera can be awkward and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

82 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REV. — 82
SEGA ■ NGC/94
This is a new idea and a new direction for PSO – card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO*, and unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter, but If you find one, then this is a decent RPG.

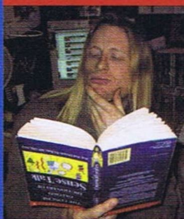
83 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT — 82
EA ■ NGC/89
Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released out into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant and it doesn't sound too great, but as with all games with no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

84 NFL STREET 2 — 81
EA ■ NGC/103
The game that tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell. This sequel boasts a new ability that allows you to run around the walls Prince of Persia-style to gain height when running, catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

85 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST — 81
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

86 AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72
A top class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



THE CLUB OF THE DAY
"So we've established that Thursday is the new Friday, but could you entertain the possibility of Tuesday being the new Saturday?"

AAAAAAH...
"Sneezing is so much fun. It's just sad that the experience is sometimes marred by having to wipe your hand somewhere."

JUMBO STEAKS
"If you ever fall out with someone and think that humour may re-break the ice, try this. Wait for them to go on holiday, sell their house, use the money to buy an Elephant, then shoot it, leaving the carcass in their old front yard. They'll see the funny side soon enough."

GASTRO-TACTILITY
"I really love food. Best of all, I like the kind of food you have to hold with both hands."

Do you have more 'sense' than our own sense-spewing Art Chihuahua, Paul? More than likely! So send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a ball of dog hair and chewing gum. Lucky you!

Send them to Paul at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 THE SIMS — 81
EA ■ NGC/79
Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

88 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE — 81
EA ■ NGC/83
Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's F1 series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

89 NHL 2005 — 80
EA ■ NGC/99
This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

90 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80
MIDWAY ■ NGC/77
The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier MKs, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

91 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/81
Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat despite this problem.

92 PAC-MAN VS — 80
NAMCO ■ NGC/90
This tiny gem is free, but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't particularly complex, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

93 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY — 80
EA ■ NGC/99
Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there's a massive amount of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, it is ruined by a poor framerate.

94 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/87
After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the Grand Theft Auto series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. It's certainly not original by any stretch of the imagination, but it is loads of fun.

95 MARIO PARTY 5 — 80
NINTENDO ■ NGC/89
Ain't no party like a Mario Party; except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The board game bits are a little slow and dull, but the minigames (popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights...) are hilarious.

96 DIE HARD VENDETTA — 80
VIVENDI ■ NGC/74
WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people; the swearing on display here may offend their sensitive ears. However, there's a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections.

97 POOL PARADISE — 80
IGNITION ■ NGC/92
Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

98 PUYO POP FEVER — 80
SEGA ■ NGC/91
Puyo Pop – if you've never heard of it you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? The two-player mode is a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

99 THE INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION — 79
VIVENDI ■ NGC/110
The Incredible Hulk takes a leaf out of Spidey's book and goes mental in a large, free-roaming city. Almost everything is destructible and you have the ability to weaponize pieces of the environment. However, it does have its flaws.



100 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN — 79
EA ■ NGC/95
A Potter title that actually works pretty well as a game? Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.




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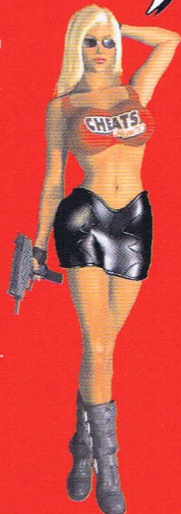
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Zelda: Master Quest
Zelda: The Minish Cap
Zelda: The Wind Waker

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